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WAR ON A WHALER.

By J. H. COLLIER.

It was a moment of breathless suspense.

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CHAPTER I.

A DISCONTENTED CREW—JONSON SPEAKS OUT—WHALES—A CATASTROPHE—A STRANGE REFUGE.

The captain of the "Bonnie Doon," whaler, of Dundee, angrily paced to and fro on the bridge of his small vessel, his sharp, ferret-like eyes impatiently sweeping the grey, tossing waste about him, and a stern expression upon his brown, weather-beaten face.

For the past month the "Bonnie Doon" had been slowly, almost listlessly, drifting hither and thither upon the icy bosom of the Arctic Ocean in quest of whales. But nothing had rewarded them. Not even the faintest glimpse of one of those monstrous denizens of the deep had been vouchsafed them; no distant stream of spouted water, glittering in the frosty sun, had appeared to break the grey monotony on all sides.

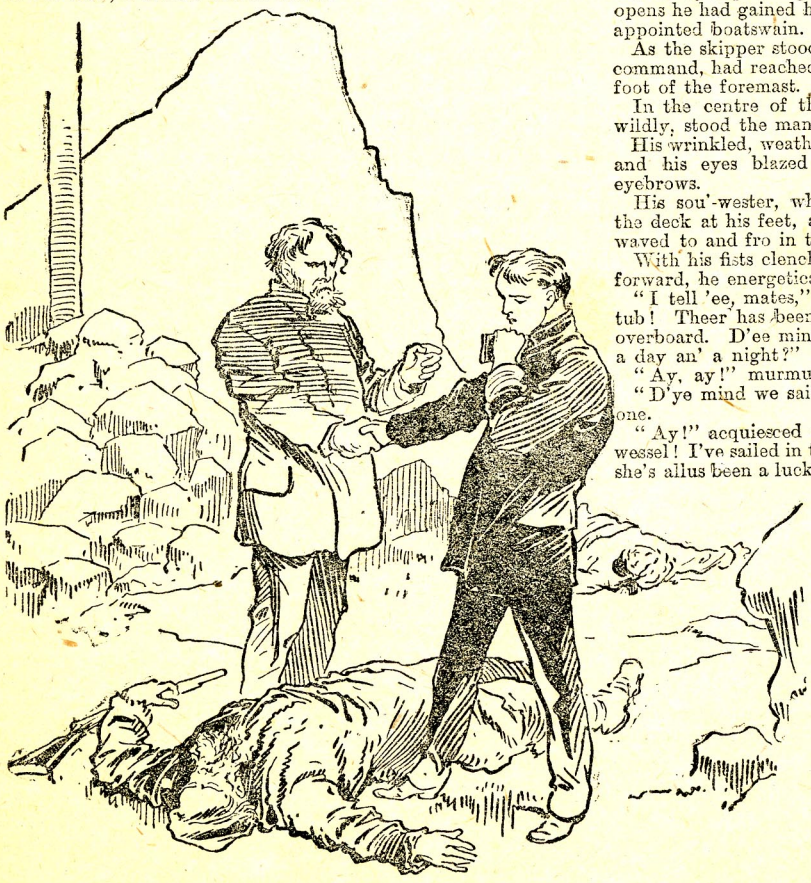
The men were already growing morose and discontented, grumbling audibly, even in the skipper's presence, at their lack of fortune, and predicting every description of misfortune as sure to befall them ere the conclusion of their voyage.

None—and the crew were mostly old whalers—they boldly averred, had ever before heard of such a run of ill-luck.

They discussed the question on every possible occasion—in the silent watches of the night, up aloft, below, and even on deck.

Suddenly Captain McPherson stopped in his impatient pacings to and fro, and angrily surveyed a small group of men, who were excitedly conversing together at the base of the foremast.

"Curse them!" he cried, clenching his hands so tightly together that his nails pierced his palms. "Curse them! Grumbling again. Who has cause to grumble most, the skipper or the crew, I should like to know?"



They gripped hands over the dead one at their feet.

He gripped the rail of the bridge with both hands, and, leaning forward, vainly endeavoured to hear what the men were saying.

The wind bore but a few disjointed words towards him, and of them he could make nothing.

"Here, Ben!" he called softly to a young fellow who sat splicing a rope at the foot of the bridge.

The young man looked up, and then he sprang to his feet.

"Ay, ay, sir!" he replied.

"Go forward and tell Joe Gringalt I want him."

With a nod the lad darted off.

Captain McPherson's stern face relaxed as he did so.

"Ah," he muttered to himself, "Ben's a good lad! Next cruise I'll take him maybe as bo'sun. Gringalt's getting old and cantankerous, the mutinous dog!"

Then, with the frown again on his face, he resumed his impatient journeyings of the bridge.

"The mutinous dog!" he repeated. "I'll give him back his papers! Ben Douglass—— Ah!"

He looked out across the sullen, heaving waste of waters.

Ben Douglass was the son of old Steve Douglass—at one time the finest whaler afloat—who, up to the day of his death, had been McPherson's truest and staunchest chum. With his last breath, the dying man had implored the captain to protect his son Ben, then a baby, and this McPherson had staunchly promised to do.

As the years progressed, and the lad grew apace, the worthy skipper rightly concluded that had Douglass lived he would have put the boy to the sea, so McPherson decided to do likewise. At the same time, and not wishing to show any favouritism, he intended Ben to work his own way upwards.

He had first joined the "Bonnie Doon" as cabin-boy, and thence by rapid stages he had risen until at the time our story opens he had gained his A.B., and was on his next voyage to be appointed boatswain.

As the skipper stood thus meditating, Ben, in response to his command, had reached the group of seamen clustered about the foot of the foremast.

In the centre of them, talking hurriedly, and gesticulating wildly, stood the man of whom he was in quest.

His wrinkled, weather-beaten face was aglow with excitement, and his eyes blazed from beneath his shaggy, overhanging eyebrows.

His sou'-wester, which had fallen from his head, lay upon the deck at his feet, and his grey, grizzled locks, thus released, waved to and fro in the breeze.

With his fists clenched, legs straddled apart, and head thrust forward, he energetically addressed his listeners.

"I tell 'ee, mates," he cried, "theer's a cuss on this 'ere old tub! Theer has been ever since poor Tom Berry was blowed overboard. D'ee mind 'ow his carcass floated astern on us for a day an' a night?"

"Ay, ay!" murmured all.

"D'ye mind we sailed out o' Dundee on a Friday?" put in one.

"Ay!" acquiesced Gringalt; "an' that's enough to cuss any wessel! I've sailed in the 'Bonnie Doon' for years an' years, an' she's allus been a lucky craft. Short cruises an' bulging barrels. But this turn! 'Ere's a month gone—a month in the height o' the season—an' ne'er an ounce o' blubber aboord, an' ne'er a glimpse o' a fluke even!"

"It's downright bad luck, thet's what it is!" a voice cried.

Gringalt nodded his head vigorously.

"It are—it are!" he grinned sagely. "An', mark me," he went on, waggiug his long, lean forefinger at the men clustered about him, "we ain't seen the wust on it! The werry fust squall that blows 'll send us all to Davy Jones. Summat's aboord this 'ere boat as didn't oughter be, an till it's gone we'll ha' no luck! It's that as is scarin' away the whales!"

A grunt of approval followed the words.

"And what d'ye advise us to do?" asked another man—a gruff, red-headed fellow.

With a mysterious wave of his hand, Gringalt motioned the men to draw nearer.

NEXT WEEK. "LEFT FOR DEAD." By J. G. Rowe.

Then, sinking his voice, he whispered one word.

The men instantly recoiled, whilst one—the gruff, red-headed fellow—almost shouted:

"What! desart, an' leave the skipper?"

"Silence, you fool!" growled Gringalt. "D'ye want to blow the gaff entirely? I'm on'y a-speaking to sensible men—men who vally their lives—them as has too much sense fur to stop on a cussed ship, them——"

Ben strode into the midst of the listening men.

"Bo'sun," he shouted, "don't talk rot! Skipper wants you."

Gringalt's wrinkled face flushed angrily.

"Lookee 'ere, young feller!" he snarled, "I wor a man afore you was a boy; I'd travelled the world afore ye could toddle. Hae ye no respec' for an old man's knowledge?"

Ben smiled.

"For his knowledge, yes," he replied; "but for your superstitious twaddle, no! Again, I repeat, what you have been drumming into these fellows' ears is rot!"

"And I quite agrees wi' ye, matey!" put in a voice.

And, turning, Ben saw the gruff, red-headed man standing by his side.

"I ain't had no book-larnin'," he went on apologetically, "an' niver went to school. But for all that I uses what some schollards ain't got; they don't teach it at schools."

"What's that?" growled Gringalt—"what's that, Jonson?"

"Common-sense," was the curt reply. "Here's a pack of fine men, to be sure! Just becos we ain't drapped acrost a bloomin' whale we're unlucky—leastways, we think so. Then one o' ye reckerlects as 'ow we sailed on a Friday. Oh, dear!—darn my deadlights, and pour a barrel o' rum down the ventilator!—we must be unlucky! The day when we shall return into Dundee hain't gotter name yet in consekence. Ho, ho! he, he! Fill me with brandy-balls, and fire me with gunpowder tea! what a lot o' hasses ye all are!"

And Tommie Jonson slapped his thigh vigorously, and indulged in several peals of uproarious merriment.

His companions looked at him angrily; but, as some there knew, Jonson was a dangerous man to deal with, so they ventured on no remarks.

Then Jonson drew himself suddenly to his full height, and addressed Gringalt.

"Bo'sun," he cried, "ye know the skipper wants yer!" Then, suddenly lowering his voice, he added: "If ye are mootinous, ye old dog, it won't pay to show yer colours yet!"

Without a word the boatswain hurried away towards the bridge.

Jonson turned to the others.

"Ye fools!" he cried; "are ye all to be led by the nose by that doddering old dunderhead? Would 'ee all mootiny an' desart the skipper that ye oughter love? Would he desart any o' ye?"

"Well, Jonson, yer sees," one began apologetically.

But the red-headed man cut him short.

"Lookee 'ere," he said; "it's quite enough o' this rot! I can see as fur through a stone wall as most on ye—maybe a foot or two further. Anyways, I knows Gringalt's move; and he ain't going' to take it. Darn me, no!" He stamped his foot furiously. Then, with one swift movement, he rolled the sleeves of his guernsey right up to his shoulders, and one after the other patted the great, muscular arms thus revealed.

"I'll clear the ship o' every darned one o' ye!" he cried, "beginning wi' the old mootiner hisself, and——"

At that instant the man in the crow's-nest hailed the deck.

"There she blows—there she blows!" he yelled.

It was a welcome and long awaited cry.

In a moment every man was eagerly scanning the surrounding waves.

Captain McPherson, who had evidently been soundly rating the discontented boatswain, paused in his conversation and looked aloft towards the look-out.

"Where away?" he shouted.

"To loo'ard! Ho, ho! there she blows—there she blows!"

The excitement upon deck was intense. After their long inaction, their patient watching and waiting, the time had at last come.

Even from the decks the school of whales were now visible, spouting and disporting themselves in the grey waters.

Already the tubs of lines had been placed in the boats; the harpoons and lances were there also.

From time to time the look-out continued to hail the deck.

"Ho, ho! there she breaches!"

"There she blows!"

The joyful men on deck took up the cry.

"There she flu-u-ukes!"

McPherson, leaving the bridge in charge of his second mate, joined one of the boats' waiting crews.

Then the welcome command rang out:

"Lower away!"

In five minutes the two boats which were to give chase were resting on the waves.

"Give way, my lads!" cried McPherson.

And the tiny craft leapt forward beneath the strong arms of the willing rowers as though they had been endowed with life.

The captain's boat led the way, although that under the command of the first mate vainly tried to overhaul it.

In the bows of the former knelt Jonson, harpoon in hand, ready, when the moment came, to launch the weapon into the whale's side.

Gringalt occupied the same position in that of the first mate.

Suddenly McPherson's voice rang out:

"Ease her!"

The men immediately rested on their oars. They were in the very centre of the school of whales.

Then Jonson rose to his feet, standing out grim and statuesque against the grey of the sea.

For a moment he stood thus; then with the whole strength of his brawny right arm he hurled the keen-barbed harpoon into the black mass before him.

The huge monster quivered for a second; then, with a rush, he was off, dragging the line with him.

So rapidly did the line run out that Jonson ordered Ben to drench it with water, to prevent its firing by friction over the loggerhead.

Then suddenly the great beast stopped, and the line was hauled in hand over hand, the boat thus being drawn nearer to the monster.

At last, when they were again within striking distance, Jonson once more stood up, and rapidly planted two lances into the quivering mass.

In his agony the whale lashed out with his tail, the men's adroitness merely saving the boat from being shattered by the blow. Then, with a rush, the great brute came charging down upon them, his wide jaws agape and his flukes churning the water to foam.

"Stern! Stern, all, for your lives!" yelled McPherson frantically.

The men bent to their oars, but the order had come too late.

There was the sound of crashing timbers, and the next moment the whole boat's crew were struggling in the reddened water.

In its rage, the huge monster had shattered the boat; but it was its last, dying effort. For a few seconds, in its death-flurry, it whirled blindly round and round, churning the water into foam; then, with a sort of shudder, it rolled over, and floated dead on the waves.

Ben, half exhausted, swam towards where it rested, and, after much difficulty, succeeded in climbing up its slippery sides.

He had been sadly buffeted in the broken water around the dead monster, and for some time after climbing into safety he lay almost senseless upon the dead mass.

At last he revived enough to look about him. Far in the distance he could see the boat commanded by the first mate. Evidently those aboard of her had witnessed the accident, for they were propelling their craft towards where the ill-fated crew had been struggling.

A few shattered timbers, idly tossing on the grey waves, were all that remained of the shattered boat; of her crew our hero could espy no trace.

Suddenly a faint cry behind him made him turn, and, to his joy, he beheld two men clinging to what had been the bows of the smashed boat.

With a glad cry he replied to the hail.

"Skipper," he cried, "is that you?"

"Ay, lad!" was the hearty response. "And here is Jonson."

"Yes," cried the other—unmistakably Jonson—"it's me—leastways, as much as is left o' me! Ha' ye any room on your island, mate, for two shipwrecked mariners?"

"Tons!" was the reply.

With a few hasty strokes, the two men propelled the broken piece of boat towards where our hero was ensconsed, and by his assistance succeeded in climbing up the great beast's slippery sides.

Directly they were in safety McPherson sighed heavily.

"We are the only survivors," he said glumly, "and——"

"Never mind, skipper," broke in Jonson cheerily. "Never say die until ye're dead; then ye can't. Better luck next time. Maybe they'll all be survivors then."

Before McPherson could make any reply to this somewhat ambiguous remark the first mate's boat was within hailing distance, and in reply to the three men's cries they brought to alongside their strange refuge.

"Well, I'm darned!" began Gringalt.

"That's what the old socks said," snapped Jonson.

And the boatswain said no more.

But after the three men were taken aboard, and while the dead whale was being tugged back to the "Bonnie Doon," Gringalt returned to the attack.

I said," he began, addressing the crew, including the captain, generally—"I said that theer was a cuss on us this trip. This is the fust whale that we have bin arter, an' it's a poor one at that. It has cost us seven men—blame me, nearly ten! It ain't wuth it. Cuss me if it is!"

Jonson fixed him with his eye.

"Eh?" he queried. "What were that ye said, my friend?"

Gringalt grunted:

"What I have said all along—there is a cuss on the ship!"

Jonson suggestively tapped the muscle of his arm.

"Rot!" he rejoined sententiously.

And Gringalt, until they reached the "Bonnie Doon," said no more.

CHAPTER II.

GRINGALT'S TREACHERY—JONSON'S TERRIBLE FATE.

The dead whale which the lost crew of the shattered boat had been instrumental in capturing was soon cut up, its blubber reduced to oil and stowed away in casks in the hold, and the skeleton of the cachelot cut adrift.

Then, with all sail set, the "Bonnie Doon" sped away to more northern latitudes.

This move of Captain McPherson's rendered the crew more hopeful. The giant of which they were in quest had evidently for some reason deserted the whaling vessel's usual cruising grounds, and the men trusted that by seeking "fresh fields and pastures new" they might be yet fortunate enough to secure a "full cargo."

But as the days slipped by, and still no glimpse of a whale, or anything like one, met their wakeful eyes the crew again grew despondent.

Grumblings arose on every side, and Gringalt, like an evil spirit, did all he could to fan the smouldering fire of mutiny into a flame.

For a while the men—still staunch to their skipper—would not heed him.

They bent unheeding ears towards him, and treated his suggestions and whispered innuendoes as but the ravings of an old and irascible man.

But as the days went by, and no luck attended them, the crew began to confer together. In bated whispers they discussed the situation around the smoky stove in the forecastle cabin.

Gringalt, with side-long glances and ill-concealed satisfaction, beheld the growing discontent.

Already, he felt, the seeds which he had sown were nearing fruition. He chuckled to himself, yet with sickening obsequiousness he performed the various duties which the captain, whom he was poisoning in the eyes of the men, set him to do.

One dark night, three weeks after his narrow escape from death, our hero, with folded arms, leant on the rail of the deck, and, contentedly puffing at his pipe, looked out into the blackness about him.

It was a dull, cheerless night, the sky obscured by black, ominous clouds, from which occasionally the watery moon peered forth, and the sea murmuring dismally alongside. The wind moaned through the creaking cordage most dolefully.

With a shiver our hero removed his eyes from the black, rolling waves and glanced along the deck.

As he did so, a stealthy footfall fell on his ear, and a dark figure shuffled almost noiselessly towards the stern of the boat.

Without exactly knowing why he did so, our hero turned and watched it.

For a second it paused beneath a small lantern affixed to the mast. The yellow light flared down upon it, and by its glare Ben recognised the man.

"Gringalt!" he gasped. "It's his watch below, and——" A sudden idea struck him. "Oho! there's something wrong here! What's he going to do?"

In a moment his mind was made up, and he silently glided along the quiet deck in the boatswain's wake.

"I must see into this!" he murmured as he did so.

A few steps brought him to where the helmsman stood, grim and statuesque.

Without a word he slipped quietly past; but, to his surprise, the man laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Hist, lad!" he whispered. "Go easy. There's murder in the air!"

"Is that you, Jonson?" Ben whispered back.

"Ay, ay!" the man nodded his head. "But keep dark. Gringalt has just gone by. There's a nice, purty party on them a-meetin' just agin the taffrail, lad"—craning his head forward. "It's mootiny they mean, nothink more nor less. Mind how ye go! I'll jist lash this wheel up—hang the consekences!—an' jine ye in a minute. Gringalt is dangerous to-night!"

With a nod our hero glided on, and a moment later the sound of heavy breathing assured him that Jonson was behind.

Just ahead of them, visible even in the blackness, they could see a blacker blot, which they knew to be the group of men whom Gringalt was addressing.

From where they lay concealed they could hear the latter's every word.

"I tellee, mates," Gringalt was saying, "there is a cuss on the 'Bonnie Doon.' Mark my words! I've said so all along, and ye can see as they are true. All this trip we've had but one whale. That cost us seven lives. But still ye won't desart the old tub. What d'ee say, then, to us a-takin' possession o' her for ourselves? I knows every inch o' this yere Harctic Sea, and"—he sank his voice almost to a whisper—"I knows what I knows!"

"And what's that?" queried a voice.

Gringalt chuckled so loudly that the two anxious listeners could hear him.

"I know," he answered vaguely, "of summat that'll pay us better'n whaling. When we ha' dropped the skipper and the lubbers as hang by 'im over the side, we can turn this 'ere wessel's nose round, make for more southern latitudes, and, heigho! the 'Bonnie Doon' can show the most o' them a clean pair o' heels."

A gasp went up from the assembled men.

"D'ee mean turn pirate?" one ventured at length.

Gringalt laughed lowly, scornfully even.

"T'sh!" he murmured mockingly. "Don't use hard words. Pirate, indeed! All we need do is to wait on certain vessels bound to the north, and—ha, ha! —for fear that they should be overloaded, take a little of their cargo."

He stopped, and Jonson clenched his hand tighter.

"The skunk! The mutinous, piratical hound!" he growled under his breath.

Our hero, reaching backward, touched him on the shoulder.

"Hush!" he whispered, "don't speak so loud. Listen!"

One of the men was speaking.

"But what are ye a-going to do wi' the skipper an' them as won't jine us?" he was asking.

Gringalt cackled.

"We've a boat or two to spare," he said at last. "The sea is wide. I shall give orders for them to be tied up and cast adrift."

With a roar like a wounded lion, Jonson sprang to his feet, although Ben tried to restrain him.

"It's no good, my lad," he panted; "I ain't a-going to listen to any more on it! Not me! So here goes!"

With one bound he was in the midst of the astonished men.

"Ye mangy, paltry hounds!" he yelled, dashing his fists to right and left; "what d'ee call yerselves, to be led by a creeping, crawling old snake like he?"

He dashed with both fists at Gringalt, and sent him reeling the whole width of the deck.

Bruised and bleeding, the boatswain scrambled to his feet.

"Seize him!" he snarled. "Seize him!"

"There ain't a man amongst ye as can do it!" Jonson retorted scoffingly.

But it was a vain boast.

Even as he spoke, one of the malcontents crept behind him, and, flinging his arms around the defiant man's neck, bore him, half suffocated, to the vessel's deck.

In a moment the others pounced upon him, and, with a coil of rope near, securely bound him hand and foot.

Then Gringalt advanced, and gazed down gloatingly upon the prostrate, helpless man.

"Ye fool!" he raved, "to dare and thwart me!"

The next instant he was sent reeling for the second time, and our hero, heated and defiant, sprang amongst them, and stood over his bound friend.

"You hounds!" he cried angrily.

"Seize him!" yelled Gringalt, from behind his companions' backs, where he was staying for safety. "Overboard with the pair of them!"

Almost instantly half a dozen of the men dragged our hero from his position over Jonson, and, seizing the latter, bound as he was, prepared to hurl him overboard.

With almost superhuman strength, Ben wrenched himself free from the men that held him, and darted after those who were bearing away his ill-fated friend.

With a yell of rage he sprang upon them.

But it was too late!

With an answering yell the three men raised their captive shoulder high, and hurled him over the side.

There was a splash, and the next instant the grey water closed over poor Jonson's head.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE WAVES.

Without a moment's hesitation, Ben sprang upon the taffrail,

and, arching his hands above his head, dived after the apparently doomed man.

Even as he sank beneath the waves, he recollected how helpless he was.

What could he do to assist his companion, who thus, bound and helpless, had been cast into the sea?

Directly he rose to the surface, his wits were on the alert.

Almost instantly he recollected that he still had his knife in his belt.

He dropped his hand upon it, and withdrew it from its sheath.

Then he looked as well as he could into the blackness about him.

In the circumscribed space which his eyes were able to penetrate nothing was visible but the rolling, angry billows.

He took a few strokes forward into the blackness.

Suddenly his hand became entangled in something long and clinging, that, by the action of the waves, twined and twisted itself about his wrist.

With a low cry of alarm, he tried to shake himself loose.

But the long, clinging mass but wound itself the tighter.

For a moment our hero's heart sank. In the blackness he could not distinguish what it was that was thus winding itself about him, threatening to drag him down to the ocean's rocky bed.

Then he felt the long, snake-like coils clustering about his legs.

Was he in the power of some mighty denizen of the deep?

The bare thought chilled his blood, and momentarily checked his energies.

He beat the waves wildly with his free hand—the hand that held the knife—but still the sinuous folds of this unknown terror twisted and twined about him.

Then, of a sudden, something white flashed up from the depths below, and the next instant the face of the man whom he had dived overboard to save, was staring straight into his.

Despite the terrible ordeal through which Jonson had just passed, he was still conscious—in fact, he had all his wits about him.

There was a twinkle lurking in his eye, although, owing to the blackness that enshrouded them, our hero was unable to see it.

"Hallo!" he cried, directly his head popped above the surface. "'Ow-de-do, Ben?"

Despite the gravity of his position, Douglass could not help smiling.

"But," he gasped, "how did you get free?"

Jonson, treading-water the while, laughed softly.

"I knew the Davenport Brothers' rope-trick!" he cried; "and so jist slipped out o' Gringalt's chums' blessed knots as easy as winkin'! I——"

Ben gave a cry of relief; he realised at once that the unknown terror which was enveloping him was nothing worse than the rope which Jonson had slipped.

By some means he had become entangled in it.

He handed his knife, with which he had intended to sever his companion's bonds, to Jonson.

"Just cut away the rope from me," he said quietly. "You got rid of it, and the waves have washed it around me."

Jonson laughed softly as he took the knife.

"Instid o' you a-rescuing me!" he chuckled, "I've gotter reskoo ye."

He sank from view as he spoke, and ere he arose to the surface again, he had freed our hero from the entangled rope.

Then, puffing like a grampus, he reappeared above the surface.

"Now, lad," he asked, "what's to be done?"

The sound of a shot rang out on the stillness.

Jonson started.

"Hallo!" he cried, "Gringalt's gang has risen. We must get back to the ship, lad!"

Far away, twinkling like stars in the distance, they could see the lights of the "Bonnie Doon," and towards these the men immediately struck out.

But the icy coldness of the surrounding waters chilled and numbed them, and at last, conscious that their efforts to reach the receding vessel were futile, they gave up, and looked about them for some means of rescue from their perilous predicament.

Owing to the darkness of the night they were unable to see far.

The twinkling lights of the "Bonnie Doon" had disappeared long ago; they were alone in the stillness and the blackness, and no means of escape presented themselves.

Apparently, the mutineers had succeeded in overpowering Captain McPherson and those of his crew who were still loyal to him.

Had it been otherwise, surely a boat would have been sent after them.

At last, as they lay side by side, slowly drifting with the almost imperceptible current, our hero broke the silence.

"Tom," he queried, "what are we to do?"

Jonson grunted.

"I'm blowed if I know," he said. "Gringalt must be mad!"

"What did he mean by 'turning pirate'?"

Jonson laughed hoarsely.

"Oh, that was all rubbish!" he chuckled. "A pretty fine pirate wessel the 'Bonnie Doon' 'ud make. An' a fine lubberly pirate chief he'd be, too! Blow me tight! But I knew 'is little game!"

"What was it?" asked Ben.

"Nuthin'!" Jonson replied laconically. "Only that he warnted to start on 'is own. If he's succeeded in gettin' 'old o' the old boat, he'll have her altered by the rascals under him. Then, when they touch port agin, wi' a noo name, who's to know but what the 'Bonnie Doon' has foundered?"

"But surely the other fellows——"

"Oh, they'll sail in wi' 'im. Equal shares 'll be the rule, which I guess is better'n the usual pay."

Thus, alternately discussing the probable course which Gringalt and his companions in crime would adopt, and their own perilous situation, the two castaways went drifting on.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUTINY—CAST ADRIFT.

Meanwhile, much was happening aboard the "Bonnie Doon."

As our hero dived after his companion, Gringalt addressed the men around him.

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled hoarsely. "What a stroke of luck. That's two on 'em gone!"

One of the fellows leant over the side, and peered into the blackness astern.

Nothing was visible.

"Ay!" he said, "Gringalt's right. They've both gone!"

"Which is the first stroke o' luck that we've had since leaving Dundee!" put in another.

The boatswain nodded.

"Fortune's with us!" he cried. "When the 'Bonnie Doon' is our'n—our'n——"

"What's that?" broke in a harsh voice—"what's that?"

The startled men turned immediately.

With a scowl upon his handsome face, Mr. Malcolm, the first mate, stood angrily surveying them.

Before either of them could utter a word, he again addressed the astonished group.

"What does this mean?" he queried again, his voice quivering with rage. "And how is it that the wheel is lashed up, and no one attending it? Where is Jonson?"

A fiendish grin enwreathed Gringalt's face.

"I suspect he's desarted his post," he began, "and——"

"What?" interrupted Malcolm. "Jonson left the wheel! He knew his duty too well, and——" He stooped suddenly, and picked up something dark that lay on the deck at his very feet.

He looked curiously at it.

"Ha!" he cried, "this is Jonson's cap, and——" Then the importance of it all rushed into his mind.

In a moment he intuitively realised what had happened.

He saw it all as plainly as if he had been an actual witness of the whole occurrence.

"You fiends!" he shouted impulsively, "there has been foul play here!"

One of the men dashed at him; but Malcolm, stepping nimbly aside, escaped the fellow's mad rush.

With loud cries, and utterly regardless of the consequences, the others clustered about him.

"At him, boys!" Gringalt commanded. "Over the side with him, the same as the others."

"Ha!" gasped Malcolm, as with his back against the bulwarks he stood facing the excited, angry crowd. "So that was poor Jonson's end?"

"Ay, and it'll be your'n!" the boatswain replied gruffly. "At him, boys!"

And in response the men dashed afresh at the dauntless mate.

At last the latter, by a superhuman effort, succeeded in driving his assailants back a few paces.

In that instant he thrust his right hand into the pocket of his pea-jacket.

When he withdrew it there was the faint glint of a revolver-barrel visible, even in the darkness.

"Now, you hounds!" Malcolm panted, "come on!"

For a moment the men hesitated. Then several, loosening their knives, hurled themselves upon the officer.

There was a crack, that rang out across the waters, and reached the two men floating along in the blackness, and one of the desperadoes fell dead.

The next instant Malcolm was overpowered and flung to the deck. A knife-blade flashed once, twice, then there was a splash, and the dead body of the mate floated away on the ocean's breast.

The mutineers had begun their murderous work, and, for a moment, they stood dazed at the enormity of their offence.

The voice of Gringalt recalled them to themselves.

"Another one gone!" he said grimly, "and——"

"A good 'un, too!" broke in a voice; "Mr. Malcolm."

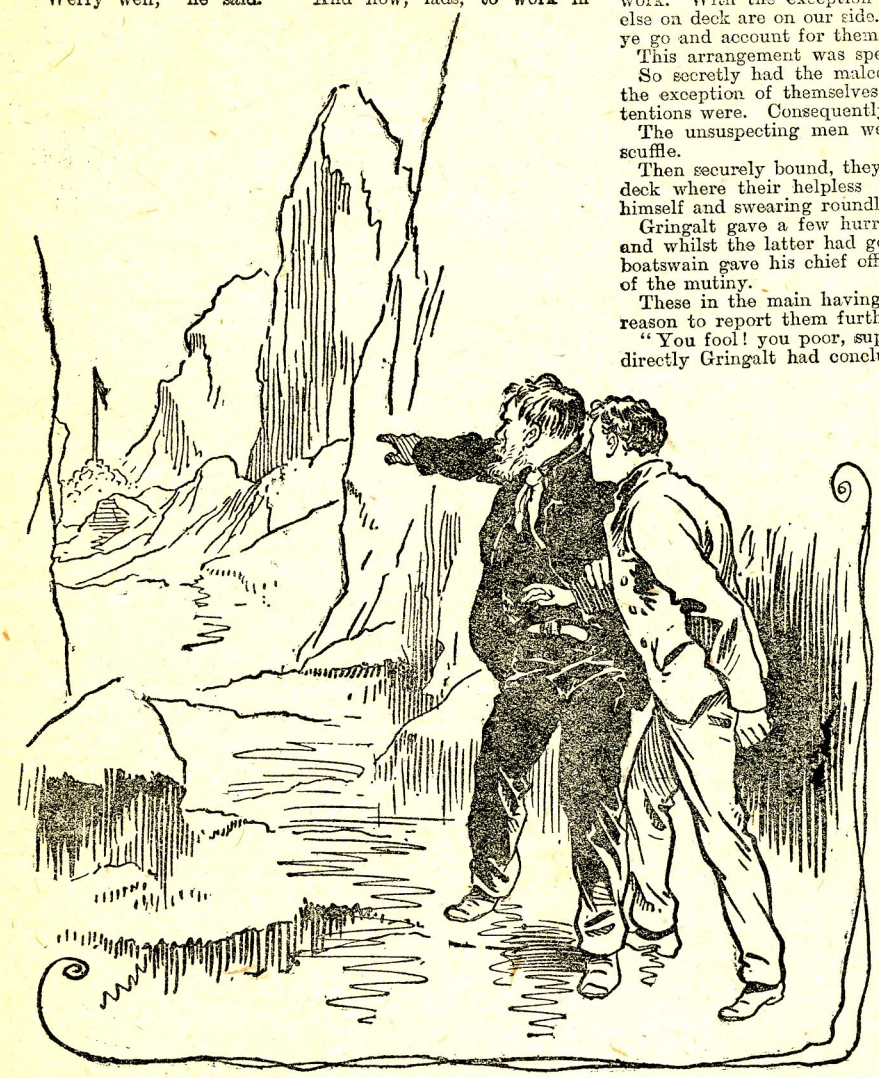
Gringalt strode up to the man's side.

"Jamieson!" he growled, "we want no half-hearted, soft-headed loons wi' us! Are ye a-goin' ter back out?"

Jamieson, rightly concluding that did he do so, his fate would be the same he had just seen meted out to Malcolm, vigorously shook his head.

Gringalt nodded.

"Werry well," he said. "And now, lads, to work in 'arnest. Already, I doubt not, some o' 'tothers are alarmed. Malcolm's shot will ha' done that."



"Look! there is the Pole!"

Suddenly, from out the blackness ahead, a voice was heard in angry conversation.

"What was that noise?" it asked. "I heard a shot!"

"I heard nothing, sir," was the reply.

Gringalt chuckled.

"Quick, boys!" he whispered, "that's the skipper talking to Neil. Neil's on our side. Come on!"

"But no bloodshed!" cried Jamieson, with a shudder. "I've seed enough o' that for one night."

"Ay, ay!" agreed the others. "No bloodshed!"

"As you like," Gringalt acquiesced. "But it would be safer to make a clean sweep o' the lot. Anyway, surround the skipper, and tie him up fust."

Like so many shadows, the six men glided along the dark decks until they reached where the captain and Neil were talking.

Then, in response to a low whistle from Gringalt, they flung themselves forward, whilst Neil, as prearranged, clasped his arms about McPherson, and bore him to the deck.

The next instant he was securely bound and helpless.

It had all happened so quickly, and so unexpectedly, that the captain lay as one dumb.

He could not realise what it all meant, and, when he did find his tongue, and turned to question his assailants, they were gone.

"And now, mates," said Gringalt, after McPherson had been overpowered, and they were gliding towards the forepart of the vessel, "I reckon that we've done the hardest part o' the work. With the exception of two fellows forward, everyone else on deck are on our side. Neil and I'll tackle them, whilst ye go and account for them below.

This arrangement was speedily and safely carried out.

So secretly had the malcontents laid their plans, that with the exception of themselves, no one dreamt of what their intentions were. Consequently there was little or no resistance.

The unsuspecting men were overpowered almost without a scuffle.

Then securely bound, they were removed to that part of the deck where their helpless captain lay—alternately puzzling himself and swearing roundly.

Gringalt gave a few hurried commands to two of his men, and whilst the latter had gone to fulfil them, the treacherous boatswain gave his chief officer a brief account of the reasons of the mutiny.

These in the main having already been related, there is no reason to report them further.

"You fool! you poor, superstitious fool!" McPherson cried, directly Gringalt had concluded. "So you've taken my boat for no better reasons than these. And what are you going to do?"

The boatswain sneered mockingly.

"I'm skipper on my own boat!" he said, "and——"

The two men reappeared, one carrying a small bag of biscuits, and the other a barrel of pork.

These they threw into one of the "Bonnie Doon's" boats. A beaker of water was also put aboard.

Then again Gringalt spoke.

"McPherson!" he said, insultingly dropping the title of "captain," "you are going to be put in that boat—you and your precious companions. As you see, I don't mean to starve you; but, at the same time—for fear that you should take it into your heads to row after us—I shall have to keep you all bound as you are. I regret——"

"You fiend!" McPherson yelled—"you inhuman hound!"

He rolled and writhed in his effort to snap the cords that held him.

But it was a waste of energy. And Gringalt, with his habitual, sardonic grin upon his face, watched the captain's desperate struggles.

"It is no use, McPherson!" he cried tauntingly; "the men what tied them knots ain't lubbers!"

Swinging round on his heel, he turned to his companions.

"Into the boat, and away with 'em!" he shouted.

Then, without another word, the waiting, expectant men conveyed the captain and those bound members of his crew who had remained true to the boat, in which they had already placed the provisions and water.

Like so many sacks of flour they were pitched in, and the boat rapidly lowered to the water.

Gringalt dropped a lantern over the side, and by its glare surveyed the bound men.

"Ah," he said, addressing them, "you all look nice and comfortable, if somewhat crowded. But, never mind; we wish them a pleasant journey, don't we, boys?"

"Ay, ay!" the others cried mockingly, one adding: "to Davy Jones!"

Then the heavily-laden boat, with its bound, ill-fated occupants, gradually dropped astern into the blackness, the derisive cheers with which the mutineers had started them on their journey still ringing in the helpless wretches' ears.

CHAPTER V.

THE ISLAND OF ICE—A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY.

When the grey of morning broke across the great, heaving waste of waters, our hero and Jonson, numbed and exhausted, looked feebly about them.

All through the long night they had been floating on their backs, borne by the current into which they had drifted—whither they recked not.

With anxious, straining eyes they looked around. On every side stretched nothing but the grey, tossing waters, unbroken by glimpse of sail, or trail of smoke.

The "Bonnie Doon" had disappeared, and what had been her fate and the fate of the captain puzzled them sorely.

Both were weak with hunger, and cared not what the future held for them.

Our hero was the first to speak.

"This is awful, mate!" he said, without turning his head, or loosening his clasp of Jonson's hand (they had clasped hands for fear of being separated during the night). "I can't hold out much longer. Do you see anything, Jonson?"

Again the sailor looked about him.

On every side stretched the waste of waters.

"Nothin'!" he cried disconsolately—"nothin'! We're doomed, lad!"

Ben sighed.

"It's hard luck!" he muttered quietly. "I'm so cold and hungry. Will this never end?"

"Yes, lad," Jonson replied; "I guess it will end too soon. But cheer up; who knows what the day may bring forth."

"Ay," our hero agreed. "Who knows?"

"This current 'll take us somewheres, anyway!" cried Jonson, again looking around. "Hallo!" he broke out suddenly, "have courage, lad, I can see something ahead."

Something glistening and white had caught his eye, and for some considerable time he eyed it curiously.

In his mind he knew what it was; but, for fear of raising false hopes in his companion's breast, he refrained from expressing an opinion.

But at last, as the swiftly approaching object came nearer, all his doubts vanished into certainty.

The great, glittering object that was bearing directly down upon them was an iceberg. Its spires and pinnacles glittered with the myriad colours of cut-glass beneath the rays of the red, frosty sun.

It was like a palace of ice, and, as it came majestically gliding towards them, our hero could not repress a cry of admiration.

"How grand it looks!" he gasped.

"Never mind 'ow grand it looks!" interrupted Jonson. "That ain't the question. Let's git aboard of it. It'll be better'n this, anyway. Bu'st my grog pannikin, yes. Now, lad, git ready to board it!"

By this time the great floating mass of ice was quite near them.

As it approached, the two men scanned it eagerly in search of a suitable spot on which to effect a landing.

To their delight they noticed a narrow, shelving perch, like a strip of icy beach, that sloped gently down to the water's-edge.

On either side, straight from the waves, the glassy sides shot up, and went tapering, like gigantic spires, skywards.

Towards the sloping portion of the floating mass both men began swimming, and ten minutes later they had reached and succeeded in clambering on it.

To their amazement, they found that the narrow slip of ice upon which they had landed led direct between the spires and pinnacles into what was evidently the heart of a gigantic field of ice.

Chilled and numbed, they stood and looked wonderingly about them.

As far as they could see stretched nothing but ice, the levels and hollows of which were covered with fine snow, like powdered rice.

The spires and pinnacles gleamed and glowed like polished glass, and to attempt the ascent of them would have been foolhardy. There was not sufficient foothold even for a mountain goat.

But on the level it was different. The powdered snow took the slipperiness off the ice surface, and afforded a grip for the feet.

Of this, Jonson speedily took advantage.

"Come on, lad," he said; "I've looked around, and there is nuthin' to eat 'ere. A run inland 'll do us good, and warm us. Come on."

He raced off, and, although he felt stiff, sore, and weak from his long immersion in the water, our hero was not long in following his example.

At every step that he took the numbness seemed to leave him, and, at last, after ten minutes had elapsed, the blood again began to circulate freely through his body. He felt it tingle even at his very finger tips.

The glow of health again pervaded his body, hope sprang anew in his heart, and shone in his eyes.

Then the pangs of hunger began to assert themselves, and, with the intention of looking for something wherewith to appease the cravings, he called upon Jonson to stop.

In a moment he did so, and waited for our hero to reach him.

"I'm hungry," Ben said directly he did so; "can't we find anything to eat?"

Jonson looked about him.

"Maybe!" he said curtly. "Anyway, we can look."

A diligent search revealed the fact that in some of the hollows the snow covered a species of moss.

This both men found to be succulent and nourishing; and, without thought of possible consequences, both ate heartily of it.

Then, feeling refreshed, they set forth on a walk of exploration. To their surprise, they found the icefield upon which they had so providentially landed to be of enormous dimensions, and although they walked for several miles, they failed to reach its edge.

"Well, I'm darned!" cried Jonson, as a white hare, startled at their approach, scuttled away into one of the snow-clad hollows. "I can't make this crib out. It ain't a berg; it's too big for that. There seems to be miles of it. It strikes me, Ben, that we're on an island. Yes, we'll call it an island—one of ice."

"An island of ice!" Ben laughed. "Why, I never heard of such a thing."

"Hit me rosy! neither have I."

"This one moves, too."

"Of course it does. Somewhere up in the Arctic Seas there must ha' been a—a convulsion o' Natur', or summat o' that sort, an' it's split this lump off o' the mainland, or mainice, an' set it adrift. The ordinary thaw wouldn't bring down a dollop like this, I know."

"So much the better for us," our hero rejoined. "It'll take all the longer to melt, and so will afford us a refuge, perhaps, until a steamer sights us. Hurrah, Tommie! we might be saved yet."

Jonson grinned.

"I reckon," he said, "that we'll find plenty to eat here, what wi' them white hares, the moss, an' other animiles what we ain't yet discovered. It strikes me that this 'ere show is a kind o' travelling Arctic region on a small scale. Anyways, whilst we're a-waitin' for a wessel to turn up we'll explore it a bit. I guess it'll be rare fun! Almost as much as if we was a-huntin' for the Pole."

"Perhaps," our hero laughed, "we shall find the Pole on this, eh?"

"Yes," Jonson chuckled; "wi' the Union Jack a-flying on it at half-mast, as a signal of distress."

At this ludicrous suggestion both men laughed heartily.

Suddenly Jonson gripped our hero's arm.

"Ye are laughin', lad," he cried excitedly, "and so am I! Look! there is the Pole!"

He pointed rapidly towards the right.

Ben, following the direction of his companion's extended finger, beheld a strange sight.

About a mile distant, upon their right hand, rising abruptly from the white level that surrounded it, was a pyramidical mass. On the summit of it a pole was stuck, and from this hung a tattered flag.

The blood danced through our hero's veins as he beheld it.

"Yes," Jonson cried again, "there is the pole—not the Nor'h Pole, lad—and its got a flag to it!"

"What does it mean?" Ben queried.

Jonson laughed.

"It means lots o' things, lad," he said. "Grub, guns—anything. That is a cairn—a heap o' stones erected by Arctic explorers over the spot where they leave their grub, and such like. We must make for that."

He swerved to the right as he spoke, and set off at a rapid rate towards the spot where the tattered flag waved, our hero following him.

Directly they reached it, a gruesome sight met their gaze.

Extended at full length upon the snow lay the frozen forms of two men. By their dress they appeared to be members of some expedition, who had returned to the cairn—where food and such like lay within their very reach—only to perish within its shadow.

Both the bodies were clad in furs, and upon their feet the snow-shoes still clung. One, in his lifeless hand, still clutched his gun.

This Jonson immediately possessed himself of; but long exposure to the weather had rendered it useless. The barrel was eaten away with rust.

Their hunting-knives, however, having been protected by

the sheaths, were in better condition. One of these Jonson took, and our hero possessed himself of the other.

Then Jonson proceeded to disrobe the bodies; but this Ben stopped.

"Why not?" his companion queried, raising his head in surprise. "They can't feet the cold, and we do. Hang it, lad! don't be squeamish."

"No," our hero asserted, "I'm not squeamish; but I don't like to rob the dead of their clothes. If we had not chanced upon these, we should have had to do without furs. Why can't we now?"

"Wery well," laughed Jonson, "we'll do without. Anyway, we'll s'arch the poor chaps, to see who they are."

To this end he rolled one of the bodies over in the snow, and diligently searched it over.

Nothing rewarded him, not even a scrap of paper that could reveal the man's identity.

Then Jonson turned to the other. As he slowly pushed the body over, first on its side, then on to its back, our hero watched his every movement.

The ice and snow had preserved the men's features wonderfully. Every line was intact, every lineament distinct.

As the dead man lay on his back, our hero bent over and carefully scrutinised his face.

With a gasp he recoiled.

Jonson, who was diligently searching the dead one's pockets, looked up.

"What's the matter, Ben?" he queried. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"No," our hero stammered; "but—but, Jonson, my father, they say, died when I was a baby. I don't remember him, but I have seen his portrait. That"—extending a shaking forefinger, and pointing to the rigid figure before him—"that is exactly like my father must have been!"

Jonson was nothing if not prosaic; to him the wonderful did not exist. He listened unmoved.

"H'm!" he said; "a funny affair. A—a what they call coincidence."

He resumed his rummaging of the dead one's pockets.

"Hallo!" he cried at last; "here's a pocket-book! Now we shall see who this poor chap is."

He opened the somewhat heavy wallet as he spoke, and carefully scanned the various papers that it contained.

At last, with a cry of surprise, he turned to Ben.

"Read that lad," he said curtly.

And our hero, as he took the papers, noticed that his companion's extended hand was trembling violently.

The first few words on the paper rivetted his attention; but as he read further the blood mounted to his cheeks, and his heart throbbed madly.

"My name is Benjamin Douglass!" he read, "of Dongal House, Sherborne, Dorset, and I write this on the 3rd day of March, 1874, in the hope that it will meet the eye of some friendly person. We have left our comrades in the snow. Our vessel is crushed, and my companion, Fred Earle, and I are nearing the end. If we do not reach the cairn by to-morrow all is lost. We are both weak, and are journeying afoot to get succour for our companions, who are farther north. We have eaten even our sledge-dogs, and if we do not return our comrades must die. They are starving; too weak to travel. Should I perish, I leave all I possess to my brother Richard, whaler, of Dundee, and I trust that the finder of this letter will see that my last wishes are complied with.

"(Signed) Benjamin Douglass.
"(Witness) Fred Earle."

"Why," our hero gasped, "this man must be my uncle!"

"Yes," cried Jonson, as he scrambled to his feet; "and I know Sherborne well. The estate is worth a mint of money."

He extended his hand.

"Ben, my boy," he said cordially, "your father is dead, and you, as his heir, are a rich man. I congratulate you!"

And they gripped hands over the dead one at their feet.

CHAPTER VI.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

"I suppose now," said Jonson at last, "I must call you Mr. Douglass, Esquire?"

Our hero laughed.

"No, Tom," he said; "I shall always be plain Ben. But we are crying before we are out of the wood. At present all this wealth is no good to me. Of what use are magnificent houses and a mansion at Sherborne to a poor wretch of a castaway on a floating icefield?"

"Not much, I admit," laughed Jonson. "But let us put these two poor chaps away decent before we do anything else."

A few minutes' search revealed the very spot suited for their purpose. In the face of the ice wall near them they discovered a tiny cavern, which penetrated deeply into the frozen mass; and in this they placed both the bodies.

"Directly we have demolished the cairn," our hero suggested, "we will block the entrance up with the stones."

"Ay," Jonson agreed, as he sagely shook his head, "that's a good idea!"

"Poor uncle!" cried Ben, as they carefully deposited the remains of his relative in its last resting-place; "he little thought when he wrote that letter in what a strange fashion it would be found!"

"No," agreed Jonson, "nor who would find it. They say as trewth is stranger'n fiction, and, kill me quick, I believes it!"

Then, as night was fast approaching, they returned to the cairn, and promptly set about its demolition. Fortunately, owing to the floating field having by this time reached warmer latitudes, the ice by which the stones were cemented together—and which is done by pouring water over the whole concern, after it has been erected—was thawed somewhat. This rendered their task easier than it would otherwise have been.

But still it was sufficiently hard, and some considerable time passed before they had made sufficient progress to effect an entry.

When they did so, entering from the top, they found the interior of the strange erection to be well-stocked. Besides biscuits, beef, ammunition, and a couple of rifles, they came upon a plentiful supply of rugs, some wine, and a small cask of rum.

"My eye!" Jonson cried; "now we shall be all right! Ben, we will manage to sleep here somehows. I guess two of us can squeeze in, an' these 'ere rugs'll be nice and warm. Look to yer knife, lad, whilst I load up these 'ere rifles."

In a few moments he had opened one of the ammunition chests, and loaded the rifles, which he put near to hand in case, as he expressed it, of an emergency.

Then, after having paid due attention to the eatables and drinkables, they laid themselves down as well as they could, and drew the rugs well about them.

After their terrible experiences of the previous night, they seemed to be, despite their cramped positions, in a veritable Elysium.

Both men slept like tops, and the night gradually slipped away.

The stars were still shining brilliantly when our hero awoke.

For some moments he lay looking up at the strip of star-spangled blue, visible through the dismantled roof of his resting-place, and inwardly wondering what had caused him to awake.

He had no need to puzzle long, for of a sudden something cold was thrust into his face, and a pair of sparkling eyes, that glowed like two live embers, glared into his.

At the same time something rough and furry rubbed over his hands.

Ben's heart leapt into his mouth. By the faint light from the stars he was enabled to make out the dim outline of his nocturnal and unwelcome visitor.

It was a bear—a Polar bear—who by some means had thus chanced upon him.

The great beast poked its cold muzzle into his face, and its fetid breath came hot upon his cheeks.

Ben, with a marvellous assumption of courage, which he did not feel at once, did the best thing possible under the circumstances.

He lay as still as if dead, the only indication of his being otherwise being his eyes, with which he followed the great beast's every movement.

For a while it sniffed and nosed him over as though doubtful of the nature of the thing that he had so suddenly fallen across.

Then, with many grunts, and discontented growls, he proceeded to leisurely turn our hero over with his paw.

This was Ben's opportunity. In a second he slipped his hand down to his belt, in which he had thrust his dead uncle's hunting-knife.

As his fingers closed over the handle, a glow of pleasure shot through him.

This was his first bear, and he meant to acquit himself as a man should.

In an instant, and to the bear's surprise, he jumped to his feet, and stood facing his furry antagonist.

The latter, for a moment, stood growling, wonderstricken at his appearance.

Then, suddenly rearing itself, it dashed, with extended paws, upon him.

Ben, knife in hand, stood awaiting it, and, directly the hairy monster was within striking distance, he drove forward.

To his horror, the knife glanced aside from the bear's coarse fur, and then, with a hoarse roar of anger, the brute gripped him in his powerful paws.

In vain Ben stabbed and thrust at the brute's white, hairy

breast. It was like digging at a stone wall, for the coarse, matted fur turned the knife's blade aside at every blow.

His breath came in short, quick gasps, and he felt that the animal was slowly but surely hugging him to death.

"Jonson! Jonson!" he gasped, as, with reeling brain and fear-distraught eyes, he finally abandoned the struggle.

"Right, lad!" came the welcome voice of our hero's companion. He had been awakened by the noise of the conflict. "I'm here, and—here goes!"

Thrusting the barrel of his rifle over Ben's shoulder, Jonson fired direct into the brute's gaping jaws.

Almost instantaneously its grasp relaxed, the warm blood spurted out over our hero's face, and, with a last growl, the bear sank lifeless upon the ammunition-chest.

With a low cry, Ben threw himself upon the rugs which served him as a bed.

"That was a near squeak!" he cried. "Another——"

A yell from Jonson prevented him from saying more.

"Look! Look, lad!" the latter cried. "The whole place is alive with b'ars!"

Following the direction of Jonson's extended finger, our hero saw a ring of shaggy heads peering down at them from the crown of the cairn.

He picked up one of the loaded rifles near.

"We must blaze into them!" he cried. And, suiting the action to the word, he fired point-blank at the head which was nearest.

With a low growl it disappeared.

Jonson immediately did the same, and for several moments the crack of their rifles was incessant.

At every discharge a shaggy head and a pair of red, blazing eyes disappeared.

At last, as none reappeared, Jonson suggested that they should scramble out of their strange resting-place and reconnoitre.

Ben, assenting to this, the pair drew themselves to the summit of the cairn, and looked about them.

On the ice at its base lay half a dozen gigantic bears, whilst an equal number were visible scurrying away in the distance.

The stone sides of the cairn were red, and splashed with blood, and all about them bespoke of the terrible struggle which had taken place.

The sight of the dead bears inspired Jonson with the liveliest delight.

"My stars!" he cried, "here's grub enough here to last us a month. Bear hams are delicious!"

"Are they?" Ben queried.

"Rather!" And Jonson smacked his lips. "Get the rifles and some of the grub out, lad, whilst I carve them up. I shall put these hams away in the cairn, and then, if we get short of grub, we shall know where to come for it."

"Where are you going then?" asked Ben.

Jonson, who was already busy cutting one of the dead monsters, looked up.

"Back to where we landed," he answered. "It ain't safe here, now that the b'ars have found us. Besides, we couldn't sight a sail from here."

By four o'clock in the afternoon, Jonson had accomplished his task, and our hero had got everything ready for their return to the spot where they had landed upon the ice.

Then, Jonson carrying the provisions, and our Ben staggering beneath the weight of the rifles and ammunition, the return journey was commenced.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE AND A RESCUE.

All through the cold, bitter night the two men travelled on, and at last, just as the morning was breaking, they arrived within sight of the narrow inlet through which they had first effected a landing upon the ice-field.

With a satisfied grunt, Jonson deposited his burden upon the sloppy ice.

"Jee—hoshaphat!" he cried. "That lot is tarnation heavy, an' I'm glad to be shot o' it. Ah!"—vigorously rubbing his hands—"I wish that there was a baked 'tater or roast chestnut-stall hereabouts!" he broke off suddenly.

"Look! Look!" he gasped excitedly, pointing towards where the grey waves lapped the ragged edge of the ice. "Lad, there's a boat!"

Ben, following the direction in which he pointed, saw that what he said was indeed true.

There, rising and falling upon the tide, its bows scraping the ice at every motion, he beheld a boat.

"Why——" he began. And then suddenly stopped.

There was something familiar in the tiny craft's appearance—something to which he hardly dared give voice.

Evidently the same thoughts were running through Jonson's mind, but he was not so reticient.

"Ben! Ben!" he almost yelled, "that is a whale-boat, and I believe that——"

"It belongs to the 'Bonnie Doon,'" concluded our hero, almost as much excited as Jonson himself.

Hardly crediting the evidence of their eyes, both men stood stock-still, staring at the tiny vessel as it rose and fell on the waves.

Suddenly, as they did so, the head of a man—evidently aroused by the sounds of their voices—rose above the gunwale.

"Help! Help!" he cried weakly. "Help us!"

Even from where they stood, both our hero and his companion could see the pitiful gleam in the man's sunken eyes.

With a terrible cry, Jonson gripped Ben's arm.

"D'ye know that face? D'ye know that voice?" he gasped.

"Ay!" Ben replied. "It——"

"It's Cap'n McPherson!" Jonson hurried on. "What has happened on the old ship goodness on'y knows."

"For the love of Heaven—help!" the weak voice came again.

Without a word, Jonson picked a small flask of rum from amid the heterogeneous burden of provisions which he had just placed upon the ice, and dashed down to the boat.

Our hero rapidly followed.

"Now, lad!" cried Jonson, directly they reached the tiny craft, "grip her bows whilst I scramble aboard."

Ben, throwing himself full length upon the ice, complied with his request, and the next moment Jonson had clambered into it.

To his surprise, he found the captain, and the loyal members of those which had comprised his crew, lying bound and helpless in the bottom of the boat.

All were weak and exhausted by want and exposure, and regarded the advent of their late shipmate with a silence almost bordering upon indifference.

Captain McPherson, who, by a superhuman effort, had succeeded in raising his face above the level of the gunwale, and thus attracting their attention, was the only one to speak.

"Jonson!" he gasped. "You here?"

"Ay, cap'n, I'm here!" Jonson rejoined cheerily. "An' I'll soon git ye all out o' it!"

Even as he spoke, he was busy with his knife severing the bonds which held the captain. By the time that he had concluded the skipper was free.

Jonson pressed the flask into his hand.

"Take a nip o' this, sir!" he said, as he did so. "It's rale good rum. An' whilst ye're doing it, I'll set these other poor divils free."

McPherson, with trembling hands, raised the flask to his lips, and took a long draught.

The effect was almost electrical.

The fiery spirit set the blood dancing anew through his veins. A warm glow pervaded his whole being. The numbness and coldness which had enchained his every fibre disappeared like magic.

By this time, Jonson had succeeded in releasing the remainder of the bound men, and, upon the captain returning him the flask, he passed it from man to man.

With all the effect was the same. Their eyes sparkled anew, and the numbness left them.

So rapid was the spirit's effect, that after a few moments the men were enabled, without assistance, to scramble out and reach the ice-field.

Then, after firmly securing the boat to a projecting spur of ice, by means of the ropes by which the men had been bound, Jonson led the way towards where the small load of provisions which he had brought from the cairn lay.

To these, the men—owing to their long fast—paid every attention, and at last, when their hunger and thirst had been satisfied, each man rolled himself up as warm as he could, and lay back upon the ice.

Then Captain McPherson, in a few, short words, told our hero and Jonson all that the reader already knows; and Ben, in return, related all which had befallen them.

When he came to that part which referred to his strange discovery of his uncle's body, the men exchanged glances. Rough, uneducated fellows as they were, the remarkable coincidence affected them singularly.

But when Ben informed them of the will, and that he was heir to a vast property, they looked incredulously at him.

"Oh, Ben!" laughed one, "ain't you coming it a bit thick, mate?"

"Are we to call you Benjamin Douglass, Esquire, now, then?" queried another.

"What I say is true, anyway!" our hero replied stoutly. "If you don't believe me——"

"Ask Jonson," broke in that worthy. "Well, mates and cap'n," he went on, "what Ben ses is all true—every blessed word on it! If 'tain't so, may every blessed 'air on me 'ead turn to a taller candle, to light the way to the Feejee Islands! There! I seed it all."

Captain McPherson struggled to his feet.

"My lad," he said hoarsely, as he gripped our hero's hand, "allow me to be the first to congratulate you on your good luck!"

Ben squeezed his hand and thanked him.

Then the others crowded round, and tendered their good wishes, all of which our hero suitably responded to. Even as he did so he could not help seeing the incongruity of it all.

He, a castaway sailor upon an island of ice, heir to thousands of pounds, was being congratulated upon his inheritance by a party of men who knew not what the morrow would bring forth.

After this the conversation ran entirely upon the history and progress of the unexpected mutiny.

One after the other the men dropped off to sleep, yet still the discussion kept on. At last only our hero and Captain McPherson were awake.

"What possessed the man," the latter said, "I don't know. Gringalt must be mad!"

"That's it, sir!" Ben interrupted. "He gammoned the others with something about turning the old ship into a pirate vessel. He declared that as a whaler the boat was cursed."

"What?" McPherson gasped.

Our hero repeated what he had said.

"The idiot!" the captain laughed. "The 'Bonnie Doon' cursed, and a pirate! Bosh! In these days, too! Look here, lad!" he continued; "Gringalt was actuated by greed. He wanted a vessel of his own, and by a bold stroke he has got possession of my boat. But wait; I have a terrible score to wipe off with that wretch when we meet!"

"Which we shall do soon, sir, I hope," Ben said quietly. "To-morrow we will all go up to the cairn, and bring away the provisions and rugs. These we will put in the boat, and then—well, we are sure to be picked up before they give out."

With this proposition Captain McPherson agreed, and then signified his intention to seek some rest.

Our hero nodded, and ten minutes later both he and the captain, rolled in their rugs, were sound asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "BONNIE DOON" AGAIN—A DOUBLE SURPRISE—THE MUTINEERS AGAIN MUTINY.

Whilst our hero and his companions slept thus, a vessel, with all sail set, sped rapidly along in the blackness. To the best of the belief of those aboard of her, the waters which they were traversing were open and unfrequented. No danger was to be apprehended. The look-out man dozed at his post, and the helmsman was slumberous.

On and on they sped, and then suddenly the half-sleepy look-out was wide awake.

Something white and glistening had shot up out of the blackness ahead.

In a trembling voice, for the danger was immediate, the man hailed the deck.

Then followed hurried commands, bawled out in hoarse voices, and succeeded by the tramplings of heavily booted feet.

But it was too late.

With a crash the vessel struck on the obstacle ahead.

For a moment she shuddered from bow to stem, and then the sound of rushing waters followed.

The men, horror-stricken, gazed at each other, for they knew what that sound meant.

Then something like a panic seized them, and they made towards the boats, which swung from their davits.

But a harsh, strident voice restrained them, and the next moment a tall man, with grey, grizzled locks, confronted them.

In each hand he held a revolver, and there was a dangerous gleam in his wicked black eyes.

"Ye fools!" he yelled, "would ye desart the vessel?"

"There's a cuss on it, Gringalt!" one of the men ventured angrily. "Ye told us so yourself."

Jonson hurled the keen, barbed harpoon into the black mass before him.

Gringalt—for it was he—glared at the man. Having his words thus thrust back at him was not to his taste.

His revolver cracked, and the man who had dared to speak fell dead.

"Overboard with that carcase!" Gringalt shouted. "I'm cap'n here, and some o' you lubbers ha' got to know it!"

He threatened the others with his weapons as he spoke. Without a murmur two of the men raised the body of their comrade, and threw it overboard.

"Now," Gringalt thundered, "to your posts! The 'Bonnie Doon' ain't done with yet by a long way!"

Then, with many oaths and wavings of his weapons, he directed the others what to do, and, like frightened sheep, the men hurried off to execute his commands.

Whilst some set about repairing the damage which the vessel had sustained—and which, after examination, proved to be of the slightest—others busied themselves aloft.

The "Bonnie Doon" was brought to, and her anchor lowered.

"We'll lay by," Gringalt growled, preparatory to again going below, "until daybreak. Then we'll investigate. Don't forget, you hounds, at daydawn I must be on deck!"

And, with a string of oaths as emphasis to his words, he strode up the deck.

Directly he had disappeared the pent up rage of the men broke forth.

Already they were heartily tired of their harsh taskmaster's overbearing demeanour, and deep down in their hearts they longed for the gentle sway which Captain McPherson had held over them.

When at Gringalt's bidding they had mutinied, and obtained possession of the "Bonnie Doon, the wily boatswain had promised them that each man should be equal with his fellows, and that there should be no superior officers.

The whaling vessel was to be run on wholly co-operative lines, and the crew were to live in a blissful state of brotherly love and equality.

Such had been Gringalt's promises to those who had been his dupes. Directly his end had been attained the man showed his true colours. By means of oaths, and a free display and use of his revolvers, he had succeeded in terrorising every man aboard.

The brotherly love and equality part of the business was forgotten, and Gringalt assumed the reins.

As he so often maintained, "he was boss, and he'd jolly well let 'em all see it."

Only when he was absent did the men breathe freely. Already one and all regretted the crime which the specious villain had led them into perpetrating, and deep down in their hearts the fires of hatred smouldered.

It wanted but a breath to fan it into a flame.

This was the state of things on this night when the "Bonnie Doon" had collided with the floating icefield, upon which her ill-fated captain and the loyal members of her crew were sleeping.

Through the long night the men worked on at the necessary repairs to the vessel's bows, and, obedient to Gringalt's commands, directly the grey of dawn came creeping over the ocean's bosom one of their number hurried to his cabin and aroused him.

With a grunt Gringalt acknowledged the summons, and ten minutes later he swaggered up on deck.

His eyes at once alighted upon the great stretch of ice under the vessel's bows, and he immediately ordered a boat to be lowered to convey him to it.

With mingled feelings, the men on board watched his departure.

Directly his boat touched the low, shelving sides of the icefield, they turned to each other.

"Let's up anchor and away," suggested one, a suggestion which the others readily agreed to.

"But how about our mates?" queried another. "We can't leave them in the hole. Let's stand by. When they see what we have done they will understand, and act according."

"Well," put in yet another, "I don't wish Gringalt any harm."

"Oh, no!" satirically from all; "none of us do!"

"But all I hopes is," the man continued, "that one of our mates hits him on the nut, and——"

"Hallo!" cried a great, shock-headed fellow suddenly, "what are they up to over yonder?"

During the conversation, the speaker had been carefully watching the movements of Gringalt and the boatman, as well as he could through the grey, morning light.

In a moment the others flocked to the vessel's side, and peered across towards the great icefield.

At once it was evident to all that something was amiss.

Gringalt, gesticulating angrily, stood in the centre of his men.

By his actions, he was bidding them to do something that went apparently against their wishes, and, for once, they were inclined to be rebellious.

Then suddenly the watchers saw the infuriated man draw his revolver, and level it at one of the party.

In a moment the fellow dashed off, and those aboard of the whaler, watching his movements, saw him make his way towards a great arm of ice that jutted out from the main body.

To their surprise they saw that a boat was moored to this, and that the setting of this adrift was the task which Gringalt's men had refused to do.

The man, whom the latter was still threatening with his revolver, rapidly unlashed the rope which held the boat in place, and pushed it off with a vigorous shove from his foot.

It shot out upon the water, and the man returned to his party.

Then, Gringalt leading the way, they tramped across the ice, and, turning sharp to the right, disappeared behind a projecting ice-wall.

The men on the "Bonnie Doon" immediately set to work in earnest.

A boat was lowered, and went after the one that Gringalt had ordered to be cast adrift.

To the delight of the men, it was found to be that in which Captain McPherson and his party had been sent to their fate.

"Hurrah, boys!" one of the men cried, "we shall have the old skipper wi' us agin yet. Him an' 'tothers have escaped somehow, and I'll bet my share of everythink that they're somewheres on that floe!"

The prospect thus placed before them nerved the men to their utmost.

Instinctively they knew that Gringalt's party would be sure to discover their late captain, if alive, and that their so doing would be disastrous to Gringalt and all his plans.

The despondent crew became positively jubiliant. With frantic haste the anchor was raised, the necessary sails set, and the "Bonnie Doon" tacked to and fro off the island of ice, awaiting that which they hardly dared to hope could be.

CHAPTER IX.

A FIENDISH REVENGE FRUSTRATED—THE CREW OF THE "BONNIE DOON" RECEIVE THEIR CAPTAIN—CONCLUSION.

As we have seen, Gringalt's first action upon reaching the gigantic floating icefield was to order the boat, which he, to his surprise, found there, to be cast adrift.

In a moment, he realised all that had occurred, and at once prepared himself for the inevitable.

As his eyes alighted on the moored boat, he knew that it was that in which he had ordered his captain and his fellows to be castaway, and he knew that by some means they had escaped his fiendish plan for their destruction.

But, as he gripped his revolver, and ordered his men to follow him further into the ice, he resolved that this time they should not escape him.

He inwardly vowed to ransack the place from end to end, and not to leave it until he had accomplished his fell design.

Obedient to his curses and bullying commands, his followers trooped along, like shadows, in his rear.

Then of a sudden Gringalt stopped, and threw up his hand as a signal to the others to do likewise.

There, in front of them, in a natural cave formed by the ice, lay a number of sleeping men, quite unconscious of any danger.

Gringalt, as he looked towards them, felt his heart leap.

Here, at his very hand, was the chance of gratifying his hatred for those who had never harmed him.

But as his men were unarmed (for his own safety the unscrupulous man had not allowed them to have weapons of any sort), the whole task devolved upon Gringalt himself.

"Stay here!" he whispered to his men, "whilst I go forrard and see who they are."

He did not for a moment imagine that any of them suspected their late captain to be amongst the sleeping ones.

Then, with his revolver in one hand, and his knife firmly fixed between his teeth, Gringalt slowly and cautiously worked his way towards the sleeping, unconscious men.

Noiselessly, inch by inch, he crawled nearer and nearer to the group, his heart beating high with the hopes of the speedy fruition of his vengeance, and his hatred burning fiercer and fiercer with him.

At last he reached where the men lay, and, like a shadow, he glided from one recumbent form to another, eagerly scrutinising every face beneath the faint, grey light.

One after the other he recognised them, as he gazed into the unconscious men's features, and then, with a thrill of satisfaction, he beheld that of Captain McPherson.

He dropped on his knees in a moment, and thrust the muzzle of his revolver to within an inch of the sleeper's forehead.

For a second he hesitated, then, with a muttered oath, he returned the weapon to his belt.

"No!" he growled beneath his breath; "not that. It would waken the others. The knife's the thing for this!"

He took the knife from between his teeth, and, aiming at the sleeping captain's heart, he raised it aloft to strike.

"Ah!" he cried, as, with uplifted hand, he knelt and looked gloatingly at his purposed victim; "sweet dreams to you, sir. They ought to be so, for you are in your last sleep."

Then the knife, in its downward flight, flashed through the air, and——

A report rang out, and, with a shrill scream, Gringalt leapt to his feet. For a second he swayed to and fro like a wind-blown reed. Then, with a half turn, he lurched heavily forward and fell dead.

In a flash every man was awake, and looking wonderingly about him.

"Why," began Captain McPherson, "what"—his eyes fell upon our hero, who, still holding his smoking rifle in his hand, stood erect by his side—"what does this mean, Ben?"

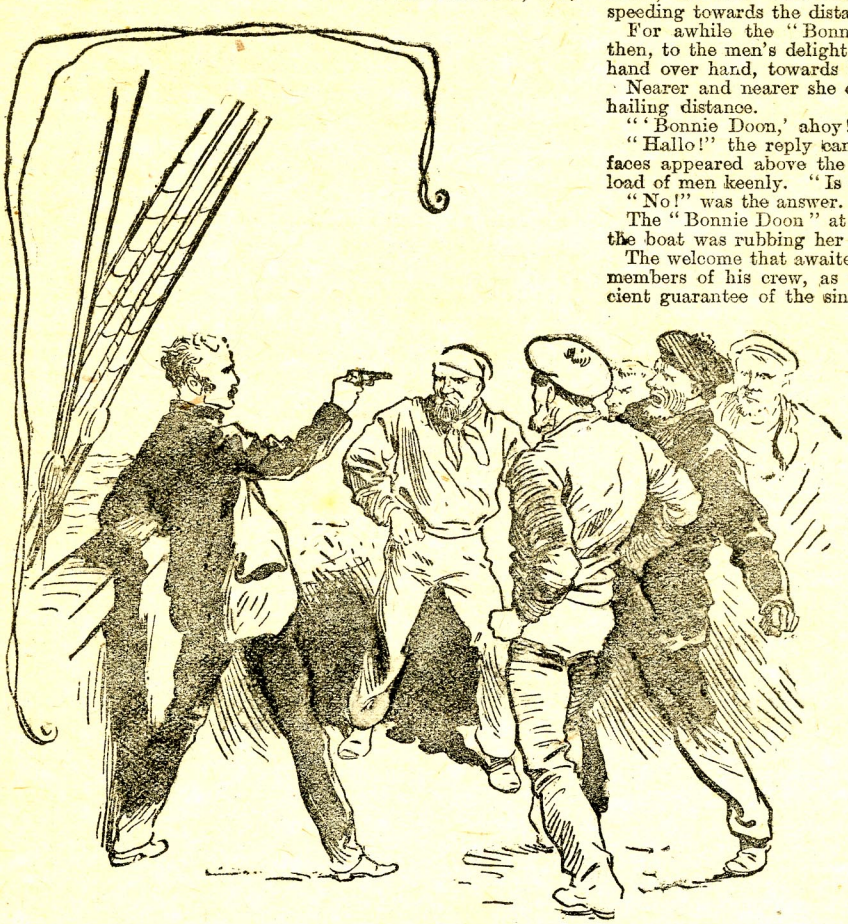
In a few words, Ben related how he had suddenly and un-

accountably awakened in time to frustrate Gringalt in his murderous intention.

"Gringalt! Gringalt!" gasped McPherson. "Is he here?"

Without a word, our hero pointed to the huddled-up mass by the captain's side.

It was all that remained of the chief of the mutineers, and,



"Now, you hounds," Malcolm panted, "come on!"

in confirmation of our hero's words, the knife was still clasped in the rapidly stiffening hand of the wicked man's corpse.

McPherson, with tears in his eyes, gripped Ben's hands.

"Thank you, lad!" he cried; "but for you, my wife and children would never have set eyes upon me again."

Then from out the rapidly lightening greyness about them, half a dozen men stepped forward.

In a shamefaced fashion, and holding their caps in their hands, they shambled along until they reached where McPherson stood.

"Hallo!" the latter cried suspiciously whilst our hero and Jonson gripped their rifles, "whom have we here?"

The foremost, who had been evidently appointed speaker, mumbled out a few words, which were wholly unintelligible to the castaways.

Then one of his companions stepped forward.

"Cap'n McPherson," he said, "we——"

But he got no further.

"The lads o' the 'Bonnie Doon'!" McPherson gasped gladly.

"Ay, sir," said one of them, "and the 'Bonnie Doon' herself lies out yonder," waving his hand towards the sea. "Will 'ee come aboard, sir?"

What the captain answered need not be related.

Then explanations and apologies followed, with the result that McPherson, only too pleased to know that everything was about to end so well, forgave all concerned, and, with them set out towards the sea.

To the surprise of all, the "Bonnie Doon," with all sail set, they found to be some distance out at sea.

The men gazed at each other aghast.

"What's to be done?" they gasped. "We are abandoned!"

"Not so!" McPherson retorted cheerily. "Your friends, like yourselves, have evidently tired of Gringalt, and, during his absence, cleared out. We must take to the boat, and make for them."

Then the men scrambled into the tiny craft as best they could, the oars were unshipped, and willing arms sent her speeding towards the distant vessel.

For awhile the "Bonnie Doon" held on her course, and then, to the men's delight, she slowly tacked, and came down, hand over hand, towards them.

Nearer and nearer she drew, until at last they were within hailing distance.

"'Bonnie Doon,' ahoy!" McPherson yelled.

"Hallo!" the reply came over the water, and a number of faces appeared above the bulwarks, and scrutinised the boat-load of men keenly. "Is Gringalt with you?"

"No!" was the answer.

The "Bonnie Doon" at once hove to, and five minutes later the boat was rubbing her side.

The welcome that awaited Captain McPherson, and the loyal members of his crew, as they clambered aboard, was a sufficient guarantee of the sincerity of the men's repentance.

The doom that had befallen Gringalt gave general satisfaction, and our hero through it was the hero of the hour.

The men expressed their contrition, were forgiven, and the mutiny of the "Bonnie Doon" was at an end.

After this, the luck of the vessel seemed to change. Whale after whale was captured, until at last the "Bonnie Doon's" barrels were full.

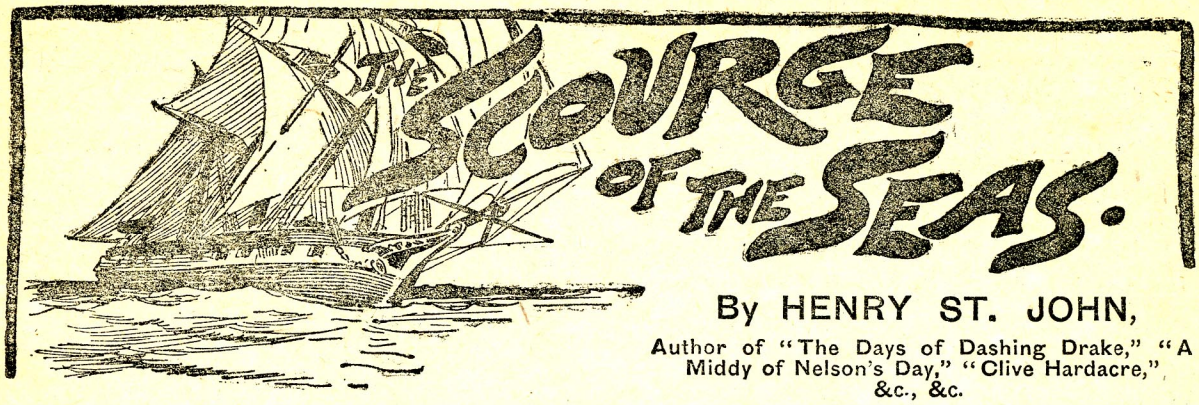
Then, with a favouring wind blowing over her stern, the vessel's bows were pointed towards Dundee, and her homeward voyage began.

* * * * * *

Three months later our hero was a rich man, and settled upon the property mentioned in the will, which, in so mysterious a fashion, had come into his possession. But Captain McPherson would not quit the sea, and share our Ben's wealth, although the latter begged him to do so. Therefore, the "Bonnie Doon" still makes periodical journeys to the whaling grounds of the North, always returning with a full cargo.

Whenever she is in port, however, Ben Douglas is sure of a visit from her skipper, Captain McPherson, and his boatswain, Tom Jonson, and there is no one more welcome at Sherborne than these two, as the readers may be sure.

THE END.



By HENRY ST. JOHN,

Author of "The Days of Dashing Drake," "A Middy of Nelson's Day," "Clive Hardacre," &c., &c.

INTRODUCTION.

The story opens with our hero—a lad of about fifteen—wandering the streets of Brightling, homeless and hungry. He finds himself on the sea-front. In the harbour many ships are moored. One in particular—a rakish-looking schooner—attracts his attention. As he watches it, he sees two shadowy figures struggling. One throws the other, who is bound, overboard. No sooner does our hero see this than he dives to the rescue, and unloosens the drowning man's wrists, only to become unconscious. On recovering his wits, he finds himself in a cosy bed in the house of the man he has saved, who turns out to be Captain Curzon, captain of his Majesty's frigate "Fearless." The captain makes Frank Farleigh a middy on his boat.

Captain Curzon, the next morning, asks Frank to promise never to mention, even to him, what occurred on the night before. Frank wonderingly does so. He then tells his own history. He had always supposed himself to be the son of old Ben Farleigh, a fisherman; but on his deathbed, a few days before, Ben had declared that this was not the case, and that his father had left him with him when he was quite a baby.

Frank asks his father's name, but Ben dies before he can tell it. On the old man's death, his nephew, Simeon Clyne, claimed all he owned, and sent Frank about his business.

Our hero then makes the acquaintance of the bo'sun of the "Fearless," one Bill Woshem. While the captain is paying his respects to the admiral, these two go off in search of adventure.

They hire a boat and row about the harbour, followed, unknown to them, by another boat, containing a muffled-up man, who has tracked them from the captain's house.

Suddenly they come across a magnificent schooner, the "Vulture." To their intense astonishment Captain Curzon hails them, and they go on deck. Immediately the captain blows a whistle, and from the companion a dozen ruffians spring out and bind the pair securely, and take them below, while Captain Curzon looks on with a triumphant smile on his face.

Frank sees Simeon Clyne on board the schooner.

They are allowed on deck, where they discover that the "Vulture" is chasing a large merchantman. The decks are cleared for action, and a dead-black flag run up at the masthead. They find that the "Vulture" is a pirate.

Just as the schooner is almost up to the merchantman another vessel is sighted, which proves to be the "Fearless." Bill and Frank attempt to jump overboard to reach the "Fearless," but Captain Curzon fires at Bill, and he falls wounded into a lee-scupper. The schooner makes sail and escapes.

Rough words pass between Frank and the captain and Lieutenant Garcia of the "Vulture," a fiend who possesses an angel's voice. Captain Curzon makes a strange proposition. They meet with a King's cutter. A boat is sent to the "Vulture."

CHAPTER XI.

A VILE DEED—THE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CUTTER—A RECOGNITION, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The dastardly deed that was perpetrated at Curzon's instigation was one of such cold-blooded treachery that Frank's loathing for the pirate increased ten thousand fold.

It was nothing less than the deliberate murder of a whole boat's crew.

The boat, impelled by her stout rowers, pulled up alongside the "Vulture."

"Hallo, on board there!" hailed the officer in charge, in a clear, boyish voice. "Heave us a rope, my hearties, will you?"

"Heave, my lads!" cried Curzon, "and with a will!"

But it was the five thirty-two-pound shot that the miscreants hurled into the ill-fated boat, not the rope for which its officer had asked.

The heavy shot went crashing through the boat's bottom, swamping her in a moment, and precipitating her crew into the sea.

Curzon leaned over the side of his vessel, and surveyed the struggles of his miserable victims with complacency.

Some of the poor fellows in the boat must have been injured by the shot, for, mingled with the cries for help, were piteous moanings, which made Frank's heart bleed.

"For pity's sake, give us help!" cried the voice of the young officer. "Throw some life-belts overboard; some of my poor lads are still afloat!"

"Why should I waste my life-belts on you?" said Curzon, in a coarse, jeering voice. "You and your poor lads can go to the bottom together. I don't trouble myself to destroy that I may have the pleasure to save."

"You fiend!" came back the voice, in feeble accents. Evidently until that moment the midshipman had not suspected the true cause of the disaster.

After that his voice was heard no more.

"Fill and stand on!" ordered Curzon. And his orders being obeyed, the "Vulture" moved off.

"Heave to!" came the command from the King's boat. "Where are you making to, Mr. Crossland?"

To this question there was no reply, for he to whom it was addressed was lying beneath the waters.

"Do you hear, sir? Heave to!" The order was reiterated with evident anger.

But as no notice was then taken, the commander of the cutter made sail likewise, and speedily shot ahead of the "Vulture," which had just enough canvas flying to keep her steady to her helm.

The instant the King's ship had passed, Curzon ordered the "Vulture's" helm up.

"Wear across her stern!" he ordered. "Now then, my lads," as the order was carried out, "let 'em have it! Fire!"

Crash! With a deafening roar, the whole of the pirate's port broadside was poured into the stern of the unsuspecting cutter.

The death-dealing hail of grape and canister tore along the cutter's deck, making the splinters fly, and mowing down the unfortunate fellows of her crew.

The shrieks and groans which followed were appalling, and, sick at heart, Frank leaned against the mainmast, cursing the fate that made him stand by helpless, and unable to throw in his lot with the sailors.

The "Vulture," controlled by the expert hands of Lieutenant Garcia, tacked and ranged up alongside the cutter so quickly that her commander had no time to respond to the pirate's broadside.

Close action now commenced. As the yards of the two vessels locked together, the crew of the pirate vessel, who had hitherto maintained silence and order, broke loose from all control, and like a pack of yelling furies, they flung themselves on to the deck of the cutter.

But they were met by stubborn, heroic opposition. In silence the British tars, standing shoulder to shoulder, drove back the demons that encompassed them at the point of their glittering cutlasses. But, compared with the number of the pirates, they were but a handful of men, and when one fell, he left a gap in the rank that it was impossible to fill up.

Above the clash of steel, and the yelling of the pirates, the clear, calm tones of the British commander rang out, encouraging his men. And they, brave fellows, needed no encouragement. With quiet devotion they fought, until the

deck, a very shambles, ran with blood, whilst they dropped dead, fighting until the very last.

And one by one they fell, until at last only a small group of men stood with their backs to the mainmast, still keeping the pirates at bay.

Curzon, who had joined the boarders, leaving Garcia in charge of the "Vulture," now pushed his way to the front, until he and the British captain were face to face.

"Yield, sir!" shouted the pirate.

"Never, you miscreant!" replied the captain of the cruiser, making a lunge with his sword at Curzon as he spoke.

The sword just pricked Curzon's breast, and he started back with an oath. As he did so, one of his men, with a heavy, downward blow, sent the British captain's sword ringing to the deck.

Unarmed, the brave man sought to defend himself with his bare hands; but one of the pirates stealthily crawled behind him, and brought the butt of his heavy pistol down on the poor gentleman's head, tumbling him unconscious to the deck.

The British captain was almost the last to fall. The bloodshed had been appalling, for with the exception of five men beside the captain, the entire crew of the King's cutter lay dead or mortally wounded on her dripping decks.

The still insensible captain was carried down to his own cabin, where, with the other five survivors, he was locked in, while the systematic search of the cutter took place.

But the treasure that Curzon had hoped, and half expected to discover, was nowhere to be seen.

"Time and lives wasted!" he exclaimed, with a bitter oath, as he strode to the cabin which contained his prisoners.

The captain of the "Flame," for so the cutter was called, had recovered consciousness, and, as the captain of the pirates, followed by his ruffianly crew, threw open the door and re-entered the cabin, he sprang up, and gazed at Curzon with startled, unbelieving eyes.

"Wilfred Curzon!" exclaimed the captain of the "Flame." "You—you! No, I am dreaming! I am mad; it cannot be you!"

Curzon laughed outright. "And why not?" he said.

"Why not?" repeated the other. "Because the Wilfred Curzon I knew was an honest English gentleman and an officer in our country's glorious service. There is nothing in common between him and a blackguardly cutthroat such as you!"

"Softly, my friend, hard words will not help you. If it is any satisfaction to you to know the truth, learn then that I am Wilfred Curzon, the honest English gentleman. But even honest English gentlemen have their whims occasionally, and it is my whim just now to be a dishonest English gentleman!" And Curzon laughed loud and long.

Presently he checked his laughter, and turned once more to the prisoner.

"It was my intention, a while ago," he said, "to spare your life; but now your recognition of me renders that course impossible. You see that to allow you to return to England and circulate the report that Wilfred Curzon, of his Majesty's Service, has taken to buccaneering, might injure my reputation. No, it is not to be thought of. I regret to say it, my dear sir, but for my own sake I shall be obliged to kill you!"

"I am ready," said the captain of the "Flame," placing his arms across his chest, and glancing undauntedly at his persecutor. "Wilfred Curzon, once my honoured and trusted friend, I will accept no favour at your hands. Traitor, murderer, pirate, I despise you!"

"Before you speak of accepting favours, wait until they are offered. I promise I will not offend by offering them!" said Curzon, whose face had paled beneath the scornful, contemptuous glance the other gave him.

"Schwartz, Marcel, bind this gentleman. Have a care that you bind him tightly. Manuel, Babbo, Fragne, Jemoni!" he continued, calling his men by name, "truss up these other fellows. Tie them two and two; this has not been so profitable an undertaking that we can throw rope away on them!"

In a few minutes the captain of the "Flame" and his five men were bound back to back, so that they could move neither hand nor foot.

In this position they were lifted up and carried by Curzon's direction into the powder-magazine.

The head of one of the casks of powder was then knocked off and its contents thrown into a heap on the floor. A long train was then laid, from the heap of powder to the door of the magazine.

"Gentlemen," said Curzon, with ironical politeness, "we will now take our leave; the slow match I will leave behind me will take about ten minutes to fulfil its duties. That will give you ample time to make your peace. Gentlemen, adieu! You will sleep well to-night."

And with a mock bow to his victims, the villain strode from the magazine, stopping for an instant to adjust the slow match.

A few minutes later, Curzon and his desperadoes embarked in a couple of boats, and pulled off to the "Vulture," which had some time since cast off from the cutter, and which now lay about half a mile away from the doomed "Flame."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST OF THE "FLAME"—AND NEARLY THE LAST OF FRANK FAIRLEIGH.

During the whole of the engagement Frank had never left the deck of the schooner. When Curzon and his ruffians had boarded the "Flame," Frank made as though to follow them, intending to throw in his lot with the cutter's crew. He was about to scramble on to the cutter's main boom, which had fallen across the deck of the schooner, with the intention of crawling along it until he could make a footing on the cutter, when a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and he was jerked backwards almost off his feet.

"Your place is here, my friend," said Garcia, in his soft, low tones. "The captain's orders are that you remain on board. Take care that you make no attempt to disobey them, or——" And here the ruffian showed the glancing barrel of his pistol.

Frank clenched his fists in impotent anger. To remain where he was, when he might be fighting for his liberty, shoulder to shoulder with the brave fellows on the cutter, was maddening; but he knew full well how hopeless a task it would be to try and escape the vigilance of the mulatto's narrow, searching eyes.

So he leaned against the schooner's mainmast, watching the scene of bloodshed, which was revealed by the feeble, fitful light of the moon, and earnestly prayed for the success of the British sailors.

He did not consider what his position might have been if the "Flame" had proved the victor. Found upon the deck of the pirate, they would have judged that he, too, was a member of the gang, and how useless would have been his unsupported denial. So it was well for Frank that matters ended as they did.

When Curzon returned to the "Vulture" his first inquiry was for Frank.

"Mr. Fairleigh," he said, in his blandest and most suave manner, "you may be interested in witnessing one of the grandest sights that it is possible to see. Will you step forward with me? There," he continued, as Frank wonderingly obeyed—"there lies our late antagonist. You can see her dark hull, I think, even though you have not a sailor's eyesight? Now watch her closely. Ah!"

Even as he spoke, the dark hull of the cutter seemed to split open, a huge tongue of lurid flame shot straight up into the cloudy sky, carrying with it a blazing wreckage of masts, spars, and timber.

Then followed, an instant later, a report so violent that a tremor shook the "Vulture" from stem to stern.

Only for one moment did that pillar of fire rear itself up to the sky. It was gone almost as soon as it appeared, then darkness resumed its interrupted sway, and the blazing ruins of the ill-fated "Flame" fell hissing into the sea.

"It was an appropriate end," said Curzon. "The cutter was the 'Flame,' and her end was flame. And it was a merry blaze while it lasted."

Frank recoiled from the man at his side. "You did that—you caused the explosion! Where are those who were aboard her?"

"Ah! where?" repeated Curzon, with mock solemnity. "You ask me a question that it is beyond the realms of possibility to answer."

With a gesture of loathing, Frank shrank away, and Curzon, noticing it, a sudden fury filled his breast. Like a madman he sprang at the boy, and gripped him by the throat.

"You!" he hissed, between his clenched teeth—"you to despise me!—you, of all others!"

Then his paroxysm of rage passed, he relaxed his grip, and Frank, like one dead, fell to the deck.

Like a man dazed and bereft of his senses, Curzon stood for a moment contemplating the inert body. Then, with a little cry, he flung himself on his knees by Frank's side.

"What have I done?" he cried wildly—"what have I done? Wretch, wretch, I have killed him! It is my accursed destiny! In my mad passion I saw her—she, whose influence might have changed my life, and now——" At that juncture Frank stirred, and bent his hands feebly on the deck.

"Help!" cried Curzon, springing to his feet. "Garcia, Manuel, help! Quickly, you dogs!"

The crew, alarmed by the shouts, came hurrying forward.

"Lift him!" commanded Curzon, who had regained his coolness. "Carry him down to my cabin. Softly now. A bullet for the man who stumbles!"

They carried Frank below, and placed him in the captain's own bed.

When they had done so, Curzon motioned to them to leave

the room, and they, glad enough to go, took their leave.

Strange man that he was, he was trembling with agitation. After the brutal murder of the boat's crew, the massacre of the brave defenders of the cutter, and the cold-blooded destroyal of the cutter and the remnant of her crew, he who had performed these deeds with equanimity, with cheerfulness even, shook and trembled like a leaf as he bent over the form of his last victim.

With intense eagerness he listened to the feeble fluttering of the boy's heart.

And when at last the heart-beats grew stronger and more even, and Frank opened his eyes, and looked about him with dazed surprise, the captain of the "Vulture" dropped into a chair, and hid his face in his hands with a relief and thankfulness too great for words.

CHAPTER XIII.

BECALMED—THE INDIAMAN AGAIN APPEARS—THE BREWING OF THE STORM—PRECAUTIONS.

But Frank's recovery was only temporary. After but a few moments of seeming consciousness, he relapsed into a death-like stupor, which was the forerunner of a low fever that kept him prostrate for many days.

When he at last awoke in his right mind, the "Vulture" had covered many miles, and had left the cold northern seas far behind her.

It was a broiling tropical day when Frank, pale and wasted, and leaning on the arm of old Bill Woshem, made his first appearance on the deck of the schooner. There was not a breath of wind stirring, and, save for the long, oily swell, which rolled lazily along the vessel's counter, there was no movement in sea or sky.

The sails hung lifeless in the still air, in short, the "Vulture" lay becalmed under the burning tropical sun, while the pitch in the seams of her deck boiled and bubbled in the intense heat, and the gleaming metal fittings on her deck, scorched and blistered the hand that touched them.

The crew, overcome by the oppresive heat, lay in picturesque attitudes of drowsy lethargy, under the shadow of the high bulwarks, or beneath awnings of sailcloth that they had rigged up for their protection. But in spite of their present idleness, the fact that they had been busy was very evident, the twelve eighteen-pounders that she carried, six a side, were mounted and in position, each with its complement of sponges, rammers, water buckets, and tubs of round, grape, cannister, and wadding, all snugly stowed on the deck alongside.

Forward in the bows a "long Tom," ready levelled, grinned defiance at the clear expanse of sea and sky.

For the rest, the decks were shipshape and cleared as though for action, the ropes were all coiled snugly away, and everything betokened a neatness and order that, as a rule, is only to be met with on board a man-of-war.

In a fixed rack, at the foot of the mainmast, half a hundred muskets, all loaded and primed, lay ready to hand on the deck, boarding pikes were piled in orderly heaps, and each of the drowsy crew had his cutlass or his crease buckled to his side, and a brace of pistols stuck in his belt.

"There's mischief a-foot, or me name's not William Woshem," said the old salt in a confidential whisper, as his practised eyes took in the whole scene, and read its meaning at a glance. "They ain't made all these preparations for nothin'. Ah, I knowed it! Look yonder, right over our bows, there lies the cause of all this show!"

And Frank, following the course pointed out by Bill's brown paw, saw, scarcely a couple of miles distant, the immense hull and the tall masts of a vessel lying as though she were becalmed on the surface of the placid sea.

She had every sail set—a pyramid of white canvas, that gleamed brightly in the sun's rays.

"Indy-man!" muttered Bill; "and I shouldn't be sp'rised if she was the i—dentical craft as we run foul of before. What was her name?"

"The 'Calcutta Castle'!" said Frank.

"Sure 'nuff that's her, and 'tis a bad day for her when this cursed pi-ratical craft overhauls her!"

"Hardly a respectful reference to your host, worthy Mr. Woshem, eh?—'cursed piratical craft!'"

Bill and Frank turned and beheld the pirate captain standing before them, with a cynical smile on his face.

When Frank had last seen Captain Curzon, he was dressed in the ordinary costume of a gentleman, with just that suggestiveness of breeziness and salt-water about the dress that a sailor can never thoroughly discard.

Now, Captain Curzon presented an altogether different figure. He wore a loose silk shirt, of a brilliant red, richly embroidered with gold, spacious white jean breeches, confined at the waist by a heavy black silk sash, in which was stuck a perfect arsenal of weapons. Silver mounted pistols, of rich workmanship, poniards, and daggers. The extremities of the trousers were thrust into a pair of red leather boots, which ascended to the knees. A sleeveless jacket, of black velvet, without ornamentation or embroidery of any kind, and a black fez-shaped cap completed this extraordinary attire.

He held out his hand to Frank, saying as he did so:

"Your return to health is a great pleasure to me. Believe me, I have never ceased to regret the unfortunate cause of your illness. Can you forgive?"

"If I could think that my forgiveness would affect you even for a moment, I would give it freely," replied Frank.

"But your forgiveness is what I most earnestly desire."

"Then you have it; but I cannot take your hand—the hand of a man who has innocent blood on his soul!"

"But 'tis the hand of a man who has served his King and country long and faithfully, that I can testify!" exclaimed Bill Woshem.

"Thank you," said the captain, with a harsh, bitter laugh; "when I want a character I shall know to whom to make my application."

"Ay, a month ago, and I would have said that Captain Curzon was a brave and honest sailor, a credit to his country, and a true servant of the King."

"That was a month ago. And to-day?"

"To-day I say he is a murderous, thievin' pirate, a curse to all honest men, and a disgrace to the country as gave him birth!" replied the honest old sailor fiercely.

"You are a bold man!" said the pirate quietly. "The man who defies me must be bold. But I like you none the less for it. The time may come when we three shall pull merrily together."

"Never!" cried Frank.

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Opinions change," he said. "We have just had an instance of that."

The conversation was at that moment interrupted by the approach of Garcia.

The mulatto favoured Frank with a scowl clearly expressive of hatred; then he turned to the captain, and said something in the comprehensive language that they sometimes used.

Curzon took up a glass, and looked long and anxiously at the sky; then he and his lieutenant went forward, and a moment later their voices could be heard arousing the crew.

"Wind from the nor'ard," said Bill. "We'll have it on us presently; but the other craft yonder 'll feel it first, and if she's smart she may show this cursed buccaneer a clean pair o' heels yet!"

At the sound of the captain's voice the crew sprang into life and activity, and all eyes were turned expectantly towards the north, where a faint haze was dimming the intense blueness of the sky.

"It'll be a fair stiff breeze when it do come down!" pronounced Bill. "Ah! I thought they wouldn't risk topsels. These pirates are smart sailors, to give 'em their doo!"

Bill's sailorly instincts were aroused to admiration at the brisk, sailorly manner in which the pirate crew lay aloft and close-furled the topsails. They were on deck again in a trice, and ready for the next order.

Meanwhile, the Indiaman had taken no such precautions, but, with every stitch of canvas set, she lay waiting for the coming breeze. Whether it was that the captain of the merchantman anticipated but a slight wind, or whether it was that he was prepared to run any risk or danger from the elements in the hope of escaping his equally relentless foe the pirate, it is impossible to tell.

Rapidly the sky darkened; heavy clouds drifted from the north-west; then came an intense silence—a stillness so great that Bill's voice, scarcely more than a whisper, could yet be heard in every port of the vessel.

"It's rank, stark, starin' madness, it is!" he exclaimed, with his eyes glued on the Indiaman. "Her masts'll go on the first puff—snap off like rotten sticks! I don't know who her skipper may be, but, whoever he is, he desarves——"

Whatever the captain of the merchantman deserved in Bill's opinion was never known, for his voice was suddenly aroused by the deep voice of the pirate captain.

"Aloft—aloft! you lubbers, lay aloft, and furl every inch of canvas, for your lives!"

The words were not out of his mouth before the sailors were in the rigging, and in scarcely the time it takes to tell it the schooner was under bare poles.

Then it was that the captain of the Indiaman saw his mistake in holding the elements too cheaply.

"Cut 'em away—cut 'em away!" roared Bill, stamping on the deck with excitement as he watched the merchant crew lay aloft and commence to reef their topsails. "Cut 'em away! There ain't a moment—not a blessed moment—to lose! Ah! too late—too late!"

(To be continued in next week's number.)

A GRANDFATHER'S YARN.

By GEORGE GERRISH.

Author of "The Fags of the Fifth," &c., &c.

Jerry Mallin stood before his old grandfather with cast-down eyes and a flushed face.

"I'm sorry, lad, that the schoolmaster has such a bad opinion of you," his grand-dad said sorrowfully, "and he did right to punish you for playing truant. But there, Jerry, you're no coward; you've got the grit of the family in you," he added proudly—"you're only a bit wild and headstrong, and we'll pull you through yet."

The boy looked up with sparkling eyes, and, trying his utmost to swallow the lump in his throat, replied in rather an unsteady voice:

"I—I won't do it again, grandfather!"

The old gentleman interrupted with "There, there, Jerry, my boy, I believe you; and I am, and always will be, proud of you. But sit down there on the rug and listen. I am going to reveal to you a closed page in the history of my early life, that I cannot even think of without keen pain. It came through playing truant from school like you have done."

Jerry stretched himself on the rug, and, supporting his chin on his hands, listened eagerly.

When I was sixteen (began the old gentleman), I was in the Upper Fourth at Dr. Hardman's Academy, now defunct, and my chum was Ronald Blair. We had the character in the school and all the surrounding country of being two happy-go-lucky, careless, and reckless dare-devils who stuck at nothing. Inseparable chums, whenever one was being flogged—a thing not at all uncommon with us—you could bet your last shilling that the other had already received his thrashing, or was going to very shortly.

Well, one day we had been up to some larks in the village, and had both received an even severer hiding than usual, so we retired to rest that night with a feeling of revenge in our hearts, and a longing to get even with the doctor.

We slept together in a study we held between us, and as the window was not very high from the ground, and the wall was spread with a thick creeper, we found it not very difficult to slip out after "lights out," and indulge in midnight rambles.

Oh, the fun we used to have on those moonlight prowls! But would to Heaven we had stayed indoors that night!

Ronald Blair was a year my senior; but I was the tallest and strongest, though he generally planned our raids.

"Come on," he said, on this eventful night, "we must work off steam some way."

The house was as still as a church, and as dark, for nearly everyone was asleep. So we opened our lattice-window, and, having clambered safely down the ivy, we soon got clear of the school premises.

"Which way?" I inquired.

"Stormont Ruin," replied my chum, in a peculiar tone. "I want to see whether it is haunted, as they say."

Without another word we set off across the fields, through the lanes and in the direction of the ruin, which we could distantly see in the bright moonlight through the trees which surrounded it.

An old man and his daughter were supposed to live there, though they were very rarely seen and, as usual in such cases, the man was reputed to be enormously rich, to be a miser, and to keep his gold with him.

Whether or not this was true we shall see.

We crept along through a wood and out on the common, which stretched in front of the old mansion.

I must confess to feeling a trifle awed and eerie, but not a thought of turning back entered our minds.

Ronald, too, seemed different to-night. He spoke in a soft and sweet voice, and there was a strange, far-away look in his eyes.

Cautiously we crept over the common, anxious that no one, whoever they might be, should see us.

Suddenly my chum clutched my arm, and whispered, "Down! down!"

In a moment we lay at full length amidst the heather, watching a sight that almost caused our blood to freeze in our veins, and which I am certain made our teeth chatter and our hair stand on end.

There, parading slowly up and down on the old stone walk which ran along the front of the ruin, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, was a weird figure in white.

Once it turned, raised its left hand, and exhibited a ghastly face, staring, as we thought, straight at us.

This done, it turned again, and resumed its slow, mechanical walk.

"There's a mystery here," whispered Blair to me, his face rather paler than usual; "and we're going to investigate it."

I knew by the tone of his voice there would be no use keeping back, so while the strange form was parading to the end of the walk, we cautiously crept as fast as we could nearer and nearer the ruinous old walls.

We got as far as we dare, and waited for the ghost to pass us again. As it came and went, we observed it closely. So strangely and silently did it move that we began to feel a trifle nervous.

However, when it had gone, our spirits rose somewhat, and, crawling out of the gorse and heather, we had sped across the stone pavement like a couple of hares, and hidden ourselves behind a part of the wall in less than two seconds.

We were watching in silence for the reappearance of the spectre on its weary vigil, when a penetrating but muffled cry rang out, "Help! help! Murder!"

We turned and stared at each other with pallid faces, but in another moment we were hurrying to the spot from whence we thought the cries proceeded.

"Quietly!" murmured Blair hoarsely. "That was human at any rate."

Again that bloodchilling cry rang out, and seemed to come from under our very feet. We stopped. There was a black pit at our feet, down which led a flight of stone steps.

My chum at once commenced the descent, I following. We came to the bottom, and saw a light at the end of a stone passage.

We crept along it, and, turning to the right before we knew where we were, we found ourselves in an old, antiquely-furnished room.

There were two masked men there, and one was struggling with an old decrepit man, and the other was endeavouring to stifle the heartrending shrieks of a lovely girl.

"Curse you! where's the money?" hissed a voice I seemed to recognise.

Before we knew what we were about, Ronald made for the one, and I attacked the ruffian with the girl.

Blair was too late; the old man fell to the floor with a knife through his heart, as my brave chum dashed up, and sprang at his murderer.

I was exceptionally strong for my age, and, having torn my man off, like lightning, seized a heavy chair and struck him senseless.

Ronald was not so lucky. In the scuffle, he had pulled off the ruffian's false beard, and I saw my friend start back and gasp as he saw revealed the callous features of our schoolmaster, Dr. Hardman.

With an oath the latter pulled out a pistol, and before Ronald could dodge or move, he had levelled and fired, and my dear chum fell forward on his face without a cry and lay quite still.

Mad with rage, and almost brokenhearted, I dashed at the fell assassin, and, in spite of sickening blows on the head from the butt of his pistol, fortunately a single-barrelled one, I hung on to him, and, joy of joys, I heard, after what seemed an age, a police-whistle sound above, and two constables dashed into the chamber.

With a fearful curse, the schoolmaster struck me senseless before he was thrown to the ground and secured, as also was the man in the corner, who was still unconscious.

When I once more came to my senses, I found myself in bed, and no one would tell me anything of that terrible night, for I was very ill. At last, however, in answer to my piteous questions about my chum, someone told me.

He had been shot dead on the spot by Dr. Hardman.

From that moment I was a changed being, my recklessness and wildness had gone.

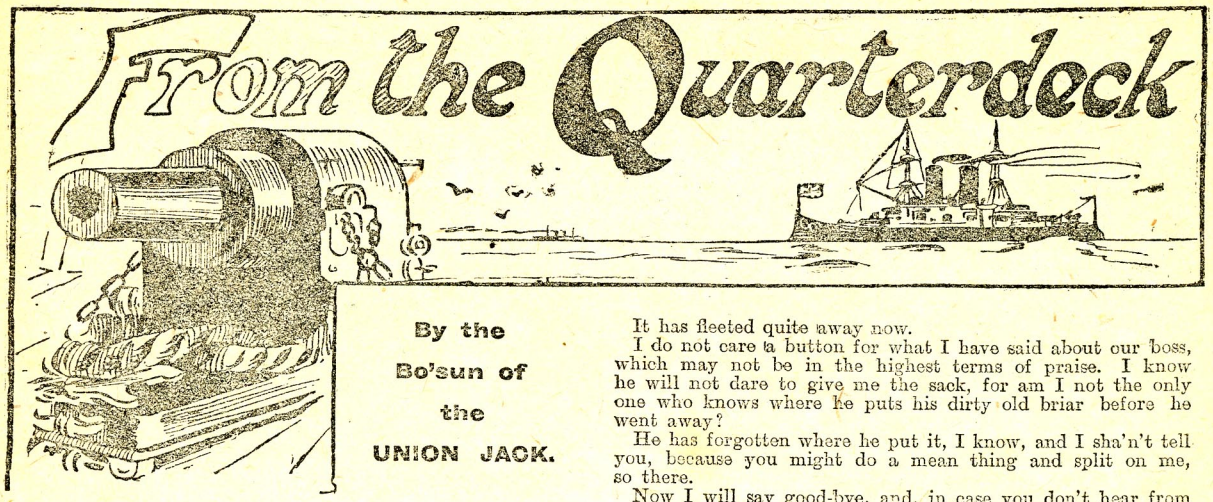
Dr. Hardman suffered the penalty of his crimes on the gallows-tree, and the girl I had tried to rescue became in time your dear old grandmother.

As he ended, the old gentleman wiped a tear from his eye, and Jerry Mallin did the same.

Then he said, "But the ghost?"

"Oh, he belonged to Hardman's gang, and was intended to scare people off.

"But two mounted policemen caught sight of him, and left their horses and stalked him. Just as they secured him they heard the shot which killed poor Ronald."



By the Bo'sun of the UNION JACK.

The Editor has gone away; now don't cheer too loud, 'cos he's coming back, and I, the sub-editor, or bo'sun as I call myself, have been ordered by the office-boy to write this page.

There are four persons in every well-appointed magazine-office. One is the editor, unapproachable, sinless, and a general humbug; the next is the office-boy; the third the office-cat, dignified and venerable; and lastly, for there must be someone to do the work, the sub-editor.

I know you think I ought to edit this paper. In point of fact, I do. I don't know anything, it's quite true, and can't hammer a lot of geography and history, or names and addresses, into your heads like the boss can, he's a regular dab at it.

But, all the same, I am a genius. Mother said so when I was quite young, and, although father disagreed with her, as was only right, yet mother was the chief one by far in our house, so I only did right to stick to her opinion.

I was once on the "Marvel" as sub-editor-in-chief—you know that lazy old humbug, who lets the office-boy write his chat; but I was sold as a slave to the editor of the UNION JACK for letting the cat eat the complete story one week.

I did not get the push—oh, no, I got the kick; but I have my revenge, for do I not know that under my able guidance, the UNION JACK will knock all rivals into fits, and do I not know also that all the other editors in Tudor Street kick themselves daily for not snapping me up when I was out of work three years.

I smile when I think of it. I do not smile often in the office, because the cat howls so. But I am proud of my smile, it is one of my best characteristics, and my relations say I could make my fortune out of it if I liked.

I hope I am not tiring you. I do not think I am, for above all my other varied and multitudinous powers, I am a brilliant conversationalist.

You will wonder where I got that word from. Well, some months ago I came in from my hurried midday meal of bread-and-milk and Eno's fruit salt, and I saw our office youth, Nimshi O'Kicksies. I used to laugh at this name, until the boss insulted me one day by saying it ran my smile very close.

Our hopeful was trying to say the word I used above.

I smiled a smile—a sad, sweet smile, the same one I used just before my young lady terminated our engagement. She used to say my smile made her feel bilious; but that was a compliment in disguise, my intense and accurate knowledge of human nature tells me.

I am seldom in the wrong—very seldom, indeed. I do not think I have ever been in fault, only some people are so obstinate, and will not be convinced sometimes that I am correct, and they are entirely mistaken.

I include among these our boss. I grieve I should have to call such a person by this name, for I am to him like Shakespeare to the poet who writes in "Pluck"—at least, without at all wishing to puff myself up. I think so, and as I have said before, I find I am always right.

But to get back to the agonies of Nimshi. I did not try to pronounce the word myself, but wrote it carefully down, and now I have my reward, for I have dragged it in above, all by myself.

Now I must leave off; but there, do not weep, I shall appear next week, and you know all our earthly joys are but fleeting, like a half-crown I borrowed only the other day.

It has fleeted quite away now.

I do not care a button for what I have said about our boss, which may not be in the highest terms of praise. I know he will not dare to give me the sack, for am I not the only one who knows where he puts his dirty old briar before he went away?

He has forgotten where he put it, I know, and I sha'n't tell you, because you might do a mean thing and split on me, so there.

Now I will say good-bye, and, in case you don't hear from me again, and you never know what might happen, 'cos the boss might come back in a hurry and read what I have written, remember, oh remember, that there is one genius in the world besides yourself, and that is the

BO'SUN.

"UNION JACK" LEAGUERS.

301, Arthur Hambly, St. Helen's; 302, R. Bristow, Burgess Hill; 303, G. Reeve, Dover; 304, J. Mennell, Hulme; 305, W. Kilner, Dublin; 306, J. Lambie, London; 307, J. Power, Cork; 308, E. Smith, Athlone; 309, W. Best, Clapton; 310, W. Gray, Perth; 311, C. Cresser, Edinburgh; 312, E. Higgins, Dalph; 313, R. Ellis, London; 314, F. Holmes, Sherburn; 315, F. Townsend, Birmingham; 316, G. H. Hirst, Huddersfield; 317, T. H. Chapple, Egremont; 318, J. Hume, Edinburgh; 319, D. Wright, Alberfeldy; 320, R. A. Kirkland, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; 321, C. Currie, Glasgow; 322 W. Luker, Weymouth; 323, J. Smith, Kelso; 324, J. S. Calunt, Hawick; 325, G. Morris, Grantham; 326, A. Fletcher, Oxon; 327, A. Davidson, Portsoy; 328, D. Tamblyn, Crouthorn; 329, W. Allen, Cork; 330, H. Newman, Allcroft Road; 331, A. Foote, Caterham; 332, W. Gordon, Glasgow; 333, G. Burns, Birmingham; 334, J. Lewis, Bedale; 335, A. Chatfield, Hastings; 336, J. Boardman, Castleton; 337, J. Jeffrey, Leith; 338, W. K. Kay, Glasgow; 339, E. Wilkinson, London; 340, H. Clarke, Glasgow; 341, A. Watt, Southfield; 342, G. Burt, Upwey; 344, A. Horne, Derby; 345, G. Gardiner, Swindon; 346, W. Ayling, Cardiff; 347, J. Moss, Bantry; 348, J. Baxter, South; 349, Curteis, Sandgate; 350, W. Sharrocks, Safford.

UNION JACK LEAGUE.

I, ...

of.....

hereby declare my wish to be enrolled as a member of the "Union Jack" League, and promise to do all in my power, by means of the "Union Jack" and otherwise, to exterminate the "penny dreadful."

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